

# Bihar in Folklore Study

*An Anthology*

GUEST EDITORS

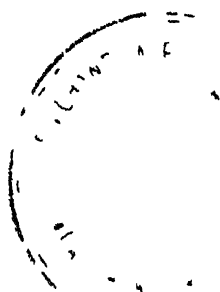
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## P R E F A C E

Studies of folklore in India is in a stage of infancy. In comparison to the vast potentialities and possibilities of research in this field in India, very inadequate work has so far been done. We have not yet been able to survey and record various forms of folklore, nor we have been able to define terms and concepts to be used in the science of folklore in Indian situation. We have not realised the various uses of folklore, and above all, we have not learnt the structural analysis of the forms of folklore which can be of immense value in understanding the little folk communities in particular and cultural processes of India and her various regions in general. If we compare our works with those of the West, the magnanimity of task that lies before the Indian folklorists become still clearer.

In this context the work of the Indian Folklore Society and the journal "Folklore" under the able guidance and leadership of Sri Sankar Sen Gupta deserves special mention. The establishment of the Society marks the beginning of the constructive phase in Indian folklore. It has encouraged somewhat systematic study of folklore in different regions of India as well as it has initiated interdisciplinary co-operation among the scholars of different branches of related knowledge.

In view of these considerations when we were asked by Sri Sen Gupta to act as guest editors of the volume on folklore in Bihar, in spite of other engagements, we could not check the temptation in undertaking the work in the larger interest of Indian folklore. As the guest editors of the volume we have faced numerous difficulties in collecting suitable papers of higher standard and of research value. The papers which we have selected here, obviously, have been written with different background, training and orientation, and thus vary in quality and approach. While the merit of such a volume, as the present one, is to be judged by the readers themselves, we feel satisfied, however, being able

to present a configuration of folklore material from different parts of Bihar.

It has been discussed at length elsewhere Bihar consists of 4 distinct cultural linguistic zones—Magahi, Maithili, Bhojpuri and Tribal. While Magahi, Maithili and Bhojpuri have very close affinity with Hindi, the Tribal cultural-linguistic zone is characterised with folk and peasant styles of life, and continue to treasure the vast store of folklore.

It has rather been a timely proposal to make a stock taking of the folklore in the State of Bihar which need be followed to fill in the gaps and to encourage a scientific and systematic study of the folklore materials, which obviously, need a band of devoted scholars in all the four distinct cultural linguistic zones. So far as this volume is concerned, it has included the work of the representative folklorists of the State as well as of those who are in making. In addition to a few papers on aspects of folklore in Magahi, Maithili and Bhojpuri, a number of papers on general nature of folklore of Bihar have been included to give an idea of the research potentialities in the field of folklore in Bihar. In view of the new approach in tribal folklore by a group of students trained in the Department of Anthropology, Ranchi University, their field work have been fully utilized.

We are thankful to all scholars who have helped us, in completing our editorial assignment. Our special thanks go to Sri Sankar Sen Gupta, Hony. General Secretary and Director of Research of the Indian Folklore Society, to think of us as guest editors and for the illuminating General Editorial of the book. We offer our heartfelt gratitude to the editor, "Human Events" where all the papers appeared serially prior to its publication in the form of the book. We owe to Indian Folklore Society for projecting the study and to Indian Publications for including the volume in the folklore series.

**L. P. Vidyarthi**  
**Ganesh Chaubey**



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Dedicated to the memory of  
Rai Bahadur S. C. Roy  
to commemorate the completion of his  
birth centenary and his contributions to  
India's tribal anthropo-folklorological studies



# General Editorial

## Scope of the Book

The present book deals with a few items of folklore of Bihar in a general way. It is planned for the students and general readers than for the specialists. Its objective is to survey the principle types of folklore of Bihar and to fix out to what extent they are scientifically valued. Indeed, it is difficult to survey the discipline of folklore with any degree of detail because of its universal concomitance. More difficult to embrace all aspects of folklore of Bihar, or such items which are needed, in a book of the present size and character.

It should be remembered at the outset that majority of scholars and workers of folklore of Bihar have come from the faculty of humanities or from the group of linguistics and literature. For sometimes, anthropology oriented scholars too are taking interest in the subject, and with them scientific research and treatment of folklore of Bihar has started centering Late Rajbahadur S. C. Roy, and the journal "Man-in-India" since 1920s.

Administrators, and Christian Missionaries, in the past, did invaluable service to the cause of folklore and tribal study in Bihar. Some of these works, we know from the assessments of the critical scholars, are either motivated or descriptive, and do not contain authentic data. Thus to draw a solid

conclusion from them is a risk. Here is the need of authentic studies on folk and tribal matter.

It is well-known, to a modern folklorologist, the important question is not what is folklore, on the contrary, what does folklore do for the folk people. It has been suggested by a great many scholars that folklore is aiding the young in education. It helps in cultivating wisdom of the folk people. It promotes group's solidarity and integration. It has the power to convert dull work into play. It is again a vehicle of communication and it is a medium of social and political protests. It is thus a mirror of rural society and a forceful organ of mass communication, understanding, exchanging views and ideas. We will see, in this book, how these have been explored in the present study by a group of scholars.

The stream of thoughts in applying folklore for the welfare of mankind has just started which should be flowed to elite, folk, and tribal societies as well as to the administrators, planners, and others whose opinion matter in shaping country's future. It is for the modern folklorologists of Bihar to chart out how these and other untold values are in force in the folk society of Bihar. How folklore could be utilised for promotion of nationalism and development of socio-cultural movement and in uplifting human character. But unfortunately, majority of the workers and students of folklore of Bihar, as elsewhere in India, are either part-times or have treated the subject as by-product of other works. It is due to this most of them are not in a position to do justice to the cause. Yet they are to

be accepted for the present till we are in a position to engage full-timers, better and distinguished scholars, to study our subject more meaningfully.

Being grateful and reverent to all the builders of folklorology in Bihar the best way in which we may be faithful to them is to separate what is truth, what is half-truth, and what is motivated study. If we cannot do this, we will make folklore study a pseudo scientific complimentary art, having nothing in common with science. And thereby our claim—folklore is a branch of socio-behavioural science,—will remain as a claim, it will never be materialized.

It is necessary to understand that folklore is impeded by the extreme diversity of both the materials of folklore and the methods of studying these materials. Debate about how folklore should be defined, how theories are to be formulated, and how an Indian synonym of the English word 'folklore' be coined, have been waged continuously for years. Different scholars have suggested different Indian synonym of 'folklore' as *loka-vṛtā*, *loka-brtta*, *loka-yana* and many others. Yet no single word for all-India use for 'folklore' has yet been accepted. Again, folklorologists all over the world say, folklore is conceived of solely antiquarian interest, it is concerned for the most part with out-moded survivals of earlier periods, and is preserved in the memories of the people. Its indispensability is unwritten tradition. This again leads to several theoretical difficulties. First, in an unwritten culture almost everything is transmitted orally, and although language, hunting-technique, and marriage-rules

are passed orally from one generation to another, few folklorologists would say that these types of cultural materials are folklore. Even in a culture with writing, some orally transmitted informations such as how to plough, or how to brush one's teeth, is not ordinarily considered to be folklore. Prof. Alan Dundes has thus said that since materials other than folklore are also orally transmitted the criterion of oral transmission by itself is not sufficient to distinguish folklore from non-folklore. Therefore, itemized study of folklore viz. folktale, legends, folk-speeches, sayings, riddles, folk-songs and dances, folk-arts and crafts and so on, might be the best way in introducing folklore of a country. With this object in view the present anthology has been planned. Here a few items of folklore of Bihar and its allied subjects are discussed by some best known workers and scholars of the subject in the present day Bihar.

Necessary to point out in this connection that these itemized forms of folklore may be divided into four types: action, science, language and literature respectively. The *action*-type involves imitation and artistic application of bodily movement like dance, drama etc.; *scientific*-type includes all beliefs, ideals and folk philosophy etc.; the *linguistic*-type deals with phonology, dialects, proverbs etc.; and the *literature*-type deals with tales, legends, ballads and so on. All these may again be subdivided into different varieties. So it is extremely difficult to survey folklore, even of a particular region, with any degree of detail if that is



not directed in a well-planned manner. Because of its diversity on the one hand, and universal concomitance the other, it is hard to define folklore objectively taking the help of a single discipline of study like literature or history. The present study, of course, may not be enriched with all objective conditions or modern thoughts and ideas, it is a step forward to reach to that. Again, folklore liasons with literature on the one hand and social science the other, so to evaluate it, it should be directed in interdisciplinary way, and in a group-study where knowledge of both the literature and social science among the respective group of scholars are to be utilised. Exactly with this objective view, the present anthology, which is a part of a series of regional studies, has been planned and brought out together. It is for the reader to judge whether the book answers its purpose and whether it contains all the information needed.

### **Preliminary Comments**

The guest editors are aware, they were not able to make the study as perfect as it should, nor were they able to incorporate more scientific articles or translate all their ideas in the present book perhaps due to the shyness and declination of a large number of local scholars to participate in this venture. Yet it seems to me that a few comment is necessary. The book itself cannot convey under what condition the two guest editors carried out the work, what stimulated them, or what obstructed them in its further development and progress ?

It is equally difficult to have a matter-of-fact idea of the folk people, their characteristics, way of life, and levels of living, by reading this book. It might further be difficult to know as to how folk people have created folklore which are recorded here? It is not also known from its pages that although Government of Bihar and its agencies together with the Government of India along with different research and academic organisations after 1947, have purposefully tried to support folklore movement, yet what are their import? No doubt, a great deal of work are still left out to individual initiative, and not to group or organisational people, as was in the past. But we do not have an assessment of the works of individual or private sources or that of the works of the government, or its agencies through its pages.

One may describe the history of folklore study of Bihar from the very beginning up to now, as a history of pioneering work of individual workers. Every scholar has not the facilities of scientific training and to work out his own method or provide himself with the necessary scientific equipments – books or other materials. It has become a sort of traditional custom to tell to the young folklorologist that he will have to go his way and create conditions for his work by himself, and that there is hardly anybody to give him support. No doubt, its positive result is the growth of independent, self-sufficient type of scholar and worker, who was able to endure many a hardship for going to the field, library, and laboratory for as perfect a study as possible for him.

But a common man in general cannot be perfect in everything of scholarship and for this he may suffer and face critics. Yet he remains in the history as a pioneer worker because he is devoted, he does not lack in sincerity and honesty.

In my opinion, historical situation in which our folklore movement proceeded and developed also accounts for its somewhat one-sided character. Although, it expanded its scope, and many new branches of it are getting explored and being tackled under the pressure of new socio-political situation (struggle for national independence, fight for national language, struggle against monopoly, communalism or against drought, flood, epidemic, famine, and so forth), its scientific specialisation remained in most cases rather narrow. A large number of scholars are interested in higher academic degrees for degrees sake and other opportunities for an opening in life. They are not so serious about the quality of the work. There the subject suffers. Among the scholars, again, some are interested in linguistics, eventually in literature with a far less attention paid on history, economy, geography, culture, tradition and so on for obvious reason. Literature always held and still holds the nation for expressing ideas and thoughts in writing. Apart from linguistics and literature, anthropology, sociology, geography, history, etc. too have attained specific positions in the field of scientific study and expressing views and ideas. These have developed literary activities and these have specific independent working methods. But folklore has not

yet attained that status as mentioned above, therefore, along with the subject those who work with it suffer and suffer both economically and academically. But honest workers have their satisfaction for their works, they do not bother for a reward, or opening or for any recognition. They do work when they feel like doing. They write when they get inspiration from inside. It is for this that it is difficult to get any ordered article from such devoted, distinguished, and whimsical workers.

It is evident in this anthology also. It was not possible for the editors to collect articles for the anthology from some of the devoted scholars as mentioned, since they did not feel like writing on editors' requests. Therefore this book has suffered. Even though what have been said by such scholars who have participated in this venture are of great significance and importance. It is a path-breaking effort of the *Indian Folklore Society* where students and teachers alike have jointly ventured to report to the readers their field observations and experiences. So it is potent with possibilities and ideas.

In the present book different contributors have treated some items of folklore of Bihar in their own way. In doing so, they have not tried to classify folklore, or have not treated folklore theories, neither have they analysed or accounted for bibliographical details scientifically. They have presented their views from direct field works and have not depended on books. It is for this a reader may find freshness and looseness of thoughts as well in some papers.

The contributors are concerned with the study of various genre of folklore and its allied subjects. They have tried to interpret their findings in limited scope. Here it is necessary to give a more coherent attention for making an assessment to the subject, but owing to non-existence of a well organised folklore library and museum, it is impossible to assess the import of folklore and its uneven distribution. A special library and museum like that of a folklore library and museum is thus a long felt need for which the book draws a fresh attention of everybody who are interested in folklore study in India.

Ignoring Benjamin Franklin's advice that, "None preaches better than the ant, and she says nothing", the present anthology is planned. It is based on two types of writings,—folklorological and anthropological respectively. By folklorological writings, we mean for this book only, such writings which are nontribal in nature: and by anthropological writings, we mean such writings which are connected with tribal people. Folklorological writings of this book are collected by Sri Ganesh Chaubey while anthropological writings are collected by Dr. I. P. Vidyarthi. Thus they two are responsible for the selection of papers. Primary editorial work too was done by them. I have tried to avoid repetition of different scholars in their writings and have correlated them in many cases. Also I have added extra information that were lacking but have not changed anything substantially. It is hoped that this effort of the organisers will bring you useful fact on

the life and living of the folk and tribal people of Bihar, and perhaps, some universal truths. Although we know from Benjamin Franklin that "Almost everything has an opposite one, no less effective, to balance it". The present book too will thus face criticism. We welcome constructive criticism since we are sure, from a healthy criticism a better and a more effective book on the subject will come out.

We have said so long about the scope of the book, modern thoughts and trends of folklore along with a few comments on the study itself. To understand all these it is necessary to say something about the people and their history. Thus we will look at to the land of Bihar and characteristics of her people which are dependent on the environmental, geographical and historical conditions.

## II

### **History of Bihar**

Since 1679 when Aurangzeb started for the conquest of Marwar, his reign was that of a long warfare. As a result of this hazardous expedition, the emperor had to spend a huge sum of money. All the revenue of the empire that yield from Jiziya Tax were spent over this warfare. The army could not be paid their salary in time.

Aurangzeb spent about 25 years of his reign in the Deccan where there was a general exodus of men and materials. The administration of the northern India was paralysed and it became a hot bed of rebellions. Thus, even before Aurangzeb's

death on March 3, 1707, the Mughal empire had become weak. The war of succession began in no time. Aurangzeb divided his empire among his three sons, Muazzam, Azam and, Kam Baksh. In a short span of time, provincial governors broke away. The nobles became increasingly strong.

In 1724, the Chief Wazir declared himself virtually as an independent ruler in the Deccan and Nizam-Ul-Mulk became the first Nizam of Hyderabad. The province like Oudh became independent under the line of Nawab of Bengal, who ruled Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. He appointed Governors for Bihar between 1707 and 1733. Fakhr-Ud-Dowla was the last independent Governor of Bihar, because after his dismissal it was governed by the Nawab of Bengal; Bihar remained as an appanage of Bengal then.

By 1742 Bengal faced the Maratha invasion. Zairuddin Ahmed, the Deputy Governor of Bihar, went to fight against the Marathas, who were defeated and fled away. He returned to Bihar. But soon he had to face a new danger from the Afgans, and was assassinated by them on January 13, 1748. This assassination was a terrible blow to Alivardi, who soon defeated them at the battle of Rani Sarai and subsequently Patna came under his control. Alivardi ruled the country successfully and he selected Siraj-Ud-Doula, his nephew, as his successor. During the time of Siraj disorderly situation arose which lead to battle of Plassey.

After the battle of Plassey Mir-Jafar ascended the *masnad* of Bengal. Bihar was not prepared

to accept the verdict of the battle of Plassey so easily. The Zamindars of Bihar were ready to challenge the powers of the East India Company. But as Jagat Seth did not help the Zamindars of Bihar, the latter could not successfully oppose the British power. Gradually, the Company became the virtual master of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, and rest of India. When the Company transferred its power to the British Parliament, it introduced certain administrative changes in Bihar.

### **A State is Born**

On December 12, 1911 His Imperial Majesty declared that Delhi will become the capital city of India, that Governor-in-Council will be appointed in Bengal. With effect from April 1, 1912 Bihar, Chotanagpur and Orissa were placed under a Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council. The Constitution of the new Province of Bihar and Orissa was determined by a Proclamation dated March 22, 1912. It was to include the following districts in the following Divisions :

Bhagalpur, Monghyr, Purnea and the Santal Parganas, in the Bhagalpur Division ;

Gaya, Patna and Sahabad in the Patna Division ;  
Champaran, Darbhanga, Muzaffarpur and Saran in the Tirhut Division ;

Hazaribagh, Manbhum, Palamau, Ranchi and Singhbhum, in the Chotanagpur Division ; and  
Angul, Balasore, Cuttack, Puri and Sambalpur in the Orissa Division.

On January 1936, an Order-in-Council was



promulgated by His Majesty creating a separate province of Orissa. From April 1, 1936 Bihar was a separate province. This again adjusted its boundary in 1956, after the advent of Independence, owing to the implementation of the recommendation of the State Reorganisation Commission after census of 1951. [Further details about Bihar may be had in the two articles of L. P. Vidyarthi which are entitled as—"Cultural-Linguistic Regions in India : Bihar, a Case Study" and "Pattern of Tribal Culture in Bihar" along with the article of K. P. Sharma—"Folk Dialects of Bihar". To avoid repetition I would not go further with these.] Even though some more aspects are needed to be elaborated for such readers who are not well acquainted with the land and the people of Bihar.

### **Population in Record**

Let us look to the population which, as in other parts of the country, is divided into elite, folk and tribal groups respectively. The total population of all these groups in Bihar come to 46,457,042 as on the 1st March 1961. It is an increase by 19.48 per cent over population of 28,783,778 in 1951. There are 17 districts in Bihar and the growth of population has almost uniform in all the districts at least for four decades. Its area is 67,198 sq. miles at the present. Ranchi is the largest area (7,052 sq. miles) and Dhanbad is smallest (1,114 sq. miles). The density of population in different districts differ very widely. Patna, Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga and Saran have a very heavy density

of population while the district of Palamau has the smallest density. For the State as a whole literacy is 18.23 out of which male 29.60 and female 6.77. Within Bihar, the three most 'literate' districts are : Patna (28.37 per cent), Dhandad (25.47 per cent), and Singhbhum (22.99 per cent). Ranchi is the most literate city in Bihar followed by Jamshedpur and Muzaffarpur. About 50 per cent of the citizen of Patna are literate.

### **Villages and Villagers**

We should further bear in mind that according to the census reports Bihar of past years had only 72,008 villages with a rural population of 2,82,49,757. At that time there were only 62 towns where the urban population was 11,08,514. The percentage of the then rural population of Bihar was 96.2.

The number of villages appeared to have been changing from census year to census year for some reasons or other. Again, according to the implementation of the recommendations of the States Reorganisation Commission 3,418 villages with a rural population of 13,74,252 and urban population of 74,133 in five towns were transferred to West Bengal from Bihar in 1956 i. e. after twenty years of the establishment of the province of Bihar. In spite of such a large number of villages being transferred from Bihar to West Bengal, the provisional figures of 1961 Census show 78,579 villages where a total population is 4,64,57,042 of which the rural population is 4,25,47,705 and the urban population is 39,09,337 respectively. Necessary

to look at this moment to the structure of the villages because it will give us an idea of the pattern of folk people in general.

The structure of the average village of Bihar has almost of the same pattern. The homesteads lie scattered in places contiguous to agricultural fields. Usually there are few sheds or raised platforms with a shed above for watching the crops from depredations of animals or men. The villages are all of permanent type excepting those that are in a *diara*. *Diara* is a piece of land that is thrown out by river in dry season.

Within the village there are different groups of habitations usually called *tolas*. Those *tolas* are habituated by distinct occupational groups and they belong to distinct castes. Normally Rajputs will live in a *tola* by themselves while the Brahmans, Bhumiar Brahmans and Kayasthas will live, in a similar fashion in *tolas* of their own. Generally, higher caste people live contiguous to each other. And lower caste people live at a fringe of the village at a little distance from the main village. In between, there are castes who occupy middle status in caste-hierarchy, or, there found such professional castes as potters, artisans, Kaharos, Kundus etc., who usually do domestic works or earn their wages as agricultural labourers. These lower caste people are—Chamars, Mushahars, Tiars and tribals like Santals, Mundas, Oraons, Malers, Hos, Mal Paharias and so on.

Again, there are some villages which are exclusive to Muslims. There are mixed villages

too. In the mixed villages people of the Hindus, Muslims, Christians and tribals live together. In the mixed villages upper caste people of the Hindu communities are not found much in number. There are some tribal villages which exclusively are inhabited by the Christian converts. Whatever may be the structure and character of the villages be, it is unfortunate that there is very little sanitation arrangement in a village. It is estimated that in a village of 500 families probably there will be not more than ten houses which have a separate lavatory. There is also a very superficial arrangement for cleaning these lavatories. Usually the village folk, both men and women, go to the fields to respond to the call of nature. Normally the women of the village go out in groups together either late in the evening or very early in the morning for this purpose. (Roy Choudhury, 1962). In spite of progress after the advent of independence no substantial development can be noticed even in such villages which are situated near the towns, not to speak of the remote villages.

However, some villages have *Gairmajruam* (public land) in front which is used for village path. It is also a notorious fact that some villages remain water-logged almost for ten months of the year. For most part of the year some villagers in Darbhanga and Saharsa districts including women and children have to wade through knee-deep water or use boat as conveyance.

The chief village transport is bullock-carts. It carries both passengers and goods. Ponies form

one of the chief means of transport in South Bihar. Occasionally, the cyclist has to carry the cycle on his own shoulders or walk with the cycle if there is no suitable stretch of roads. Elephants were in great demand in North Bihar at one time but now they have become very scarce. Camels are rarely seen as means of transport. In Chotanagpur district there used to be light vehicle known as Pushpush. In some villages Jeep and motor cars too are found. These villages are situated near the towns and are comparatively well off economically.

The picture of a village in Bihar is that of an agricultural type. In that agricultural community caste hierarchy played a predominate part. The farming families were linked up by a strong kinship ties and the steel frame of the village was in groupism based on the caste system. There are now several zones of industrial belts due to the founding of factories or the development of mine and small, cottage or big industries. The villages in the industrial zones have naturally changed and are changing rapidly. Villages in Bihar do not have any such village institution of predominantly binding character. The leisure hours are spent either at the house or in the gossips with selected smaller groups of friend.

### **Class Structure**

It should not be forgotten in this connection that the class structure of the folk and elite societies of the villages are fundamentally the same. Some large scale agriculture and industries developed on the

basis of what began as a division of labour—a division between producers and the organisers of production. The organisers are sophisticated and rich people. They provide intellectual workers—physicians, engineers, professors, teachers, administrators, officials, architects, scientists, literateurs, researchers and so on who are just as indispensable as the manual and industrial workers of the society. They use the authority derive from the nature of their task to concentrate the surplus in their own hands and this caused many of them egoistic.

The growth of new economy has the effect on consolidating the State in the form of theocracy. By the study of folklore of Bihar, therefore, we come to understand that there exists an interest, independence of people, their mental growth, which though conditioned by circumstances, is never determined by circumstances. In this way the great plethora of human knowledge may be correlated with an insight into the nature of human society by being attuned to wide and deep range of human experience. In fact, the thrall of totalitarianism of both left and right should be shaken in the universal desire to recapture the authority of truth of human dignity. The class difference between elite, folk and tribal people should not be there but in practice it is very much in existence. Exploiters and exploited have not changed very much in outlook. Exploitation should be stopped. New socio-economic society should be grown up which is absolutely necessary for the development of the country, for improving the wretched condition of the folk and tribal people of Bihar.

And from this objective view modern folklore studies should be directed. It is only then the service of the folklorologists would be recognised. Because in that way they are in a position to prove that their services are indispensable for the society at large.

### III

#### **Establishment's Role**

Undoubtedly, the planners of the Republic India are conscious of all these. Therefore, after the attainment of independence, central and state governments have paid due attention to preserve rich and traditional culture of the people by establishing different organisations, research institutes, etc. and by publishing different books and journals which are devoted to science, literature, arts, culture, music, songs, dances, and so on. The Government of India thus has established the three cultural akademies (i) Sahitya Akademy, (ii) Sangeet Natak Akademy and (iii) Lalit Kala Akademy. The establishments of (a) Khadi and Village Industries (Board) Commission. (b) The All India Handicrafts Board, (c) The All India Handloom Board, (d) The Central Silk Board, (e) The Coir Board and (f) the Small Industries Board should be remembered because these were established for the promotion of handicrafts, village and small industries in the First Plan period and which are still continuing. The boards have effective role for the economic uplift of the folk artisans and consequently have share in

economic development of the country. Besides, Tribal Research Institutes and the type organisations, works of the Commission of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, efforts and activities of the Anthropological and Archaeological Surveys of India together with the works of the social survey and social study units of the census organisations and ICCR have advanced the cause of folklore in recent days. Above all, the activities of the local and regional organisations should not be belittled while taking stock or assessing the works done in the field of folklore. However, along with the organisations mentioned above, there has been the formation of state akademies and state level organisations together with different councils of researches including the Indian Council of Social Science Research. The principal objects of the ICSSR is to promote social sciences in the country. Since folklore is a branch of social science, it should be viewed in the discipline of social science, and where such perspectives, as to expand its quantum, to improve its quality, to facilitate its utilization in the policy formulation and national development, are necessary. It is due to the untiring efforts of our folklorogists it has been possible to include it as an optional subject of study in the Post-Graduate classes with literature (Hindi, Bengali etc.), local and ancient history and culture, and anthropology in different universities and the like institutions. What is needed now is to approve folklore as an independent subject of study. Many advanced studies too are being made for D. Phil., Ph. D., D. Litt., D. Sc. degrees in different



universities. And here the role of the Indian Folklore Society be taken into account once again. It is evident from all these that the scope of folklore study has been widened what is needed now is to correlate workers and to recruit genuine scholars for further advancement of folk and tribal studies.

#### IV

##### **A Note on the Present Book**

The present book deals with certain items of folklore, where many items are absent. Most of the contributors are regarded as specialists in their respective fields of research. The first article is written by Dr. L. P. Vidyarthi, one of the guest editors of this anthology, and who is a widely known scholars of socio-folk-anthropological studies in India. It is a case-study to develop criterial aspect to carve out cultural linguistic regions of Bihar. He emphasises the importance of the area approach for a correct understanding of the unity and varieties of Indian civilization. He also refers to applicability of the culture, ecological approach to the study of tribal groups living in the same geographical regions but having contrasting environments. In the next article, Sri P. P. Mahato gives a bibliographic account of the folklorologic work done so far in Bihar. He has divided his study into (a) researches in folktales ; (b) researches in folksongs ; and (c) researches in riddles and proverbs, but he has not followed the method of bibliography as demanded by library science. [In this respect H. C. Prasad & Gita Sen-

Gupta's "A Bibliography of Folklore of Bihar", Calcutta, 1971 may be referred to as an authentic work.] The third article is written by Dr. K. P. Sharma on the dialects of Bihar and their characteristics. In this article he has said that there is no language as may be called 'Bihari' in Bihar. The chief dialects spoken in this State are : *Tirhutīā*, *Bhojapurīa* and *Magāhia*. *Maithilī* too is a dialect but it is spoken by a very highly sophisticated section or elite people. In the fourth article, Dr. S. D. Mishra treats a few type of folksongs of Bihar and their relation to folk society in their life-cycle. He says that the essence of folk-life of Bihar may be affirmed in its most authentic folksongs. Sri D. S. Upadhyaya treats folk-arts of Bihar from ancient to modern days. He says that the folk-art of Bihar started from pre-Mauryan period, and later on, this tradition was modified by the court-art of great vitality and technical competence. Sri Hari Uppal in his article discusses different forms of folk-dances of Bihar. He says that after Independence a new awareness toward traditional culture with a narrow nationalist spirit had developed from an eagerness to search for oral and traditional literature, arts and crafts, songs, dances, and so on. This, he said, coincided with many of our efforts. Sri Ganesh Chaubey, another guest-editor of the volume, has surveyed folk-gods and goddesses of Bihar very efficiently. He says that the worship of some gods and goddesses are common throughout Bihar. Some are confined to some particular localities or regions. Some caste people have their own gods

and goddesses. Again, according to Sri Ganesh Chaubey, different families belonging to the same caste worship different gods and goddesses and the same god or goddess are sometimes worshipped with different kind of articles as offerings. In other words, the pattern of worship of the same set of gods and goddesses vary in different castes and communities. The next article is written by Sri Subhas Chandra Sarkar. In his article on Maithili language he says that for five hundred years Maithili had been neglected by the people at large whose mother tongue it is. And, as per Sri Subhash Chandra Sarkar, without an extension of literacy among the people the Maithili literature cannot grow as fast as it should. Therefore, it is the duty of every civilised person to see that all barriers to spread of education in the State are removed at the earliest opportunity. Dr. R. M. Sarkar has treated the Santal insurrection through ballads and considered it as essential in getting an overall idea on Bihar and her people. Because it is the root cause, as per him, of the formation of a separate district, the Santal Parganas, under the act of XXXVII, 1855. Sri P. C. Roy Choudhury has raised some important questions in his article. While discussing folklore studies in Bihar and its declining trend he says that it is unfortunate that researches in ancient history have generally been confined to the succession of monarchs, political shifts and not much notice has been given of the common people, their culture, tradition, political and social life and so on. It is still unfortunate that folklore of South

Bihar has not yet been tapped properly, he says. Collected folklore too has not yet been properly utilised by our social scientists. He emphasises on the importance of collection, preservation and above all classification and interpretation of folklore materials. In his next article Dr. Vidyarthi has dealt with the pattern of tribal culture of Bihar. He says that the tribal culture is in a process of transition. As an expert, he says that apart from Government welfare measures, a new leadership is emerging from the tribals themselves and thus a series of movements which have been variously called 'nativistic', and 'reformation' or 'revitalisation' characterise the modern political movement among the tribals of Bihar particularly of Chotanagpur area. These situations are of multiple implications and need careful analysis. Sri R. D. Munda describes cultural elements in Ho songs. Hos are an important tribal group of Bihar. He says that the language of the Hos are as much influenced by the Oriya as by the Bengali. Sri D. C. Munda describes Santal stories on foolishness and human sacrifice. Here simplicity, directivity and wisdom of the tribal people like that of the Santals are described. Sri M. Sinha 'Munj' lucidly describes the utility and achievements of the folk-arts of Bihar. He has also accounted for the artisans, their productions, regionalism and the steps taken by the Government of Bihar and different agencies of the Government of India for the development of folk-arts and crafts in Bihar. He suggests that there is a need of co-operative federation of artisans for pur-

chasing raw materials, equipments or tools etc. It should again be the duty of everybody to look into the healthy competition among the artisans. He further suggests the idea of rewarding artisans every year as a gesture of encouragement to the really deserving one. Sri C. Hembrom describes cultural elements in Munda riddles where he has placed fifty riddles in original with their English renderings. On the top of this collection he has added a short note describing the importance of the collection of riddles. Dr. T. N. Lal discusses the importance of Maithili folksongs and classifies it from such songs as depict (a) beliefs and traditions ; (b) rites, customs and superstitions ; and (c) folk-literature. The next article is written by Dr. S. D. Ojha on some aspect of marriage and marriage custom as depicted in folksongs of Bihar. And in the last article Sri Chaubey has narrated a few tribal folk songs.

It is evident from this note that the scope of the present work is very wide but the treatment is very much limited. Here some items and not all the aspects of tribal and folklore of Bihar are covered. Already we have described the reason for this which need not be repeated again. Now we will introduce our contributors.

### About the Contributors

*L. B. Vidyarthi*, M. A. Ph. D. is the University Professor and Head of Anthropology, Ranchi University. He is a member, National Panel on

credit and is a reputed scholar of Gandhian thought and of socio-cultural-anthropology and traditional literature.

*R. D. Munda*, is M. Sc. student in Anthropology of the Ranchi University, Ranchi.

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*M. M. Sinha 'Manuj'* M. A. is an Assistant Producer of the Rural Programme in the All India Radio, Patna. He has registered his name for Ph. D. on Critical Study of Modern Bhojpuri Literature in the Allahabad University. He himself is a modern poet and a scholar of folk-arts and literature.

*Cernus Hembrom*, is M. Sc. student in Anthropology, Ranchi University, Ranchi.

*N. Sharma*, M. A., Ph. D. is a lecturer in English and Hindi in R. S. College, Tarapur, Monghyr. He is a Ph. D. on the Study of Magahi Ballads from Bhagalpur University and is preparing for D. Litt. on Magahi folk-tales.

*Y. P. Sinha 'Yogesh'* M. A. is at present working as an Education Extension Officer in Barabigha Block in the district of Monghyr in Bihar. He is preparing his Ph. D. thesis on Erotic Sentiments in Magahi Folksongs.

*T. N. Lal*, M. A., Ph. D. is the lecturer in Hindi in the Central Hindi Institute, Agra. He is a Ph. D. on Studies in Matihili folksongs and is preparing his thesis for D. Litt. on 'A Constructive Study of Grammatical Structure of Hindi and Telugu.' He is also a modern poet and a journalist. He has a number of papers and books to his credit.

*S. D. Ojha*, M. A., Ph. D. is a Professor of Hindi in the Co-operative College, Jamshedpur. He received his Ph. D. degree on the Study of Cultural Aspects of Bhojpuri Proverbs. He is now engaged in collecting materials on rituals and beliefs in Bhojpuri region for submitting a thesis for D. Litt.

## V

### **Last but not the Least**

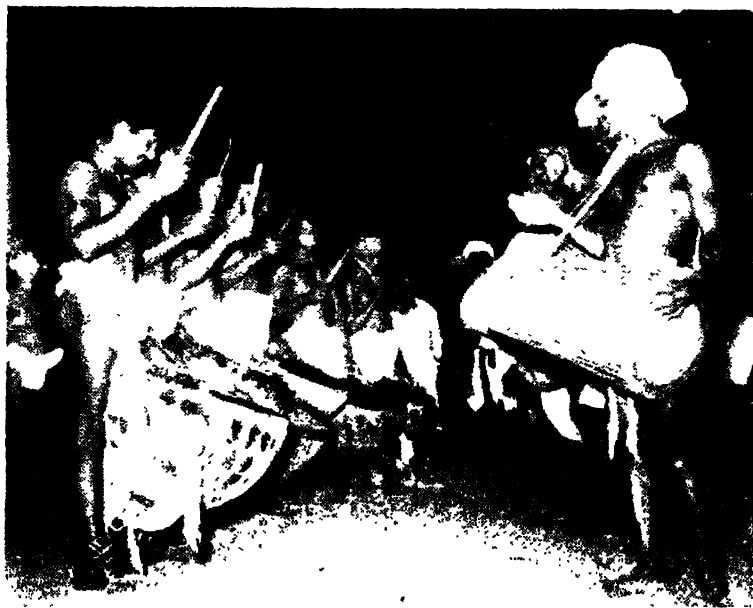
I believe this sums up the attitude of the folklore study in Bihar. It also hopes to inspire scholars to undertake such or a better study. It presents a great service to the students, enthusiasts and scholars of folklore, for it brings to their attention some of the basic philosophy of the folk people of Bihar. Its reading will create a better understanding of the reasons why folk people not only have been able to cling to their basic philosophy but to resist the onslaught of counter-philosophies.

It is indeed a pleasure to offer our gratitude and grateful thanks to all the participants of this venture. The contributors have taken great pains. I offer my special thanks to Dr. L. P. Vidyarthi and Pandit Ganesh Chaubey, the two Guest Editors, for the very active support and co-operation. I also offer my thanks to Sri Ajoy K. Bhose of the Gupta Press for the printing, Sri Bholanath Bhattacharya for the cover, to Miss Putul Das of Indian Publications for clerical assistance and many others for their co-operation for bringing it out.



The ladies of the less advanced group of Mithila performing Jai Jaihar Nritya. They sing vigorously while dancing.

*Photo Bhartiya Nritya Kalamandir, Patna*



The Brija of Gulma Sub division dance with the sound of Nagara and mashaal drums and keep their drums hanging from their wrist while dancing mayestically in a circle

*Photo Bhartiya Nritya Kalamandir, Patna*



# **Cultural Linguistic Regions in India**

## **Bihar—a Case Study**

**By**

**L. P. Vidyarthi**

### **I**

Competent scholars like Bacon (1946) and Kroeber (1947) from the point of view of the comparisons of culture, view India as a separate and definable culture-area different from the culture of South-east Asia, Central Asia or the Middle East. At a level of abstractions and generalisation, considering the Indian Nationhood, the socio-religious structure of Hinduism and overall predominance of caste system as an organising principles of caste system, the fundamental unity of Indian civilisation, seems to be acceptable. On the other hand the concept of the diversity within India can be carried to an extreme point where one might consider it impossible to make any valid generalisation at all.

Those anthropologists who have looked closely at India, though convinced both of civilisational unity as well as of tremendous diversity, have attempted at an intermediate approach to link the local traits with the regions, and the regional traits with an All India pattern. Such as, intermediate approach between the all-India abstractions and

village-level uniqueness seems to be more acceptable. The present study is a review of some of these works before any attempt is made to develop criteria to carve out cultural linguistic regions in Bihar.

Area approach is well-known to the disciplines dealing with the distribution of land, climate, natural vegetation, and other ecological conditions. In the anthropological context, the three spheres of racial, linguistic and cultural characteristics in relation to area-approach or geographical distribution deserve consideration.

## II

### **Racial classifications**

Though the racial classification has been one of the most obscure area of Indian ethnography, anthropologists see India's population as forming basically one race with varying substocks or at best two races. (Keith 1936, 19 p, Hooton 1946, 612-14 pp, Coon et al 1950, 122-29 pp, Boyd 1954, 400-03 pp.). A number of anthropologists like Risley (1915) Hutton (1933 : 439-61 pp), Von Eickstedt (1935, 3-80 pp) ; Guha (1935, 1937, 1944), and Sarkar (1954), have made extensive studies regarding the racial history and ethnic composition of India. Risley basing his classification on metric criteria, viewed undivided India as being made up of seven racial groups, occupying specific block of territory such as :

- (i) Turko-Iranian—Baluchistan & Northwest Frontier Provinces in Pakistan ;

- (ii) Indo-Aryan --Punjab, Rajputana, and Kashmir ;
- (iii) Scytho-Dravidian Gujarat, South-west Sindh, Bombay ;
- (iv) Aryo-Dravidian --Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar ;
- (v) Mongolo-Dravidian - Bengal and Coastal Orissa .
- (vi) Mongloid--Type-Himalayas. Assam and Nepal ;
- (vii) Dravidian Madras, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Highland Orissa, Southern Bihar and Hyderabad.

Risley, as is evident from the classificatory nomenclature, was convinced of a direct relationship between physical types and languages. In the light of recent researches, it seems obvious, that he felt established relationship among race, language and culture and attempted to use linguistic and cultural criteria in delineating his racial groups. Risley's classification continued to be acceptable until an alternate and more acceptable classification was proposed by Guha. He essentially reversed Risley's approach to the relations between race and geography and also examined geographic areas to see what the racial composition was in a specific geographical area (Guha 1931, x-lx pp). From his analysis of the measurements Guha postulated two types of races--aboriginal races and progressive races. Guha traced one or more of these racial strains in the contemporary Indian population. In his later writings, he mapped out

areas in terms of the respective racial strains ; (1) Nordic (hills in Travancore Cochin), (2) Proto-Austroloid (tribal) areas in central and southern India) (3) Mongoloid (Himalayan fringe, Assam), (4) Palae-Mediterranean (south-India lower classes in the north), (5) Mediterranean (north India), (6) Oriental type ( Punjab, Sindh, Rajputana and Western U. P. ), (7) Western Brachycephals (South Baluchistan, Sindh, Kathiawar, Gujarat, Maharashtra), and (8) Nordic (North-Western India).

Guha has given us a very detailed classification for the Indian population. He has viewed India's population essentially as a basic type with regional variations, which are due to inter-mixture, and combination and recombination of invading groups with the basic type (Cohn:1957: 55 pp).

Among the critics of Guha's classification, Sarkar deserves special mention who in many of his writings, has proposed an alternative classification of the following racial groups with a particular geographical territory. (1) Austroloid, (2) Indo-Aryan, (3) Irano-Scythian, (4) Mundari-speaking (5) Malayo-Polynesia. (6) Mongoloid (1961:29-30 pp), Sarkar's classification denies the Negrito element as the basic substratum in the Indian population as proposed by Guha. His insistence to linguistic categories in the racial classification revives the importance of Risley's classification, and lead us to think about the relationship between language and race in the light of latest evidences explored by him before death.

## III

**Linguistic Classification:**

Though many battles are being fought on the issues of language, it continues to be the least studied phenomenon in India. Except the census figures, Grierson's *Linguistic Survey Volumes* and some sporadic works of general nature (Chatterjee 1944, Emeneau 1950, 1956), there are wide gaps to be filled in the theoretical and descriptive studies of languages in India.

As regards the major languages of India there is rather more general agreement than on classifications of physical types. However, owing to political considerations, several controversies have arisen and the academic considerations about languages have been confused.

Recently Emeneau (1956) has marshalled considerable evidence and has pointed out that India is a linguistic area: meaning thereby an area which includes languages belonging to more than one family, but showing traits in common which are found not to belong to the other members of one of the families. Chatterjee (1951, 1953) comes to a similar conclusion and also finds evidence of the influence of Austric languages on Sanskrit.

The importance of Emeneau's and Chatterjee's proposition is not that the influence of the various language families on one another set up a situation, in which communication is facilitated – India still is a land of many languages and dialects which are mutually unintelligible. However, owing to their

mutual contacts of over 3,000 years or so, major similarities in structure have evolved, and no matter what their ultimate origin, we have to view India in terms of its languages and races as sharing many things in common. In view of all these, at a level of abstraction, these linguists talk of India as a linguistic area.

Within the frame work of India as a linguistic area, several regional linguistic areas may be carved out. In India, three major language stocks have been discerned. They are : Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, and Austro-Asiatic (Grierson 1927). Indo-Aryan, to follow Grierson, is divided into the following literary and vernacular languages—Assamese, Bengali, Bihari, Oriya, Eastern Hindi, Western Hindi, Rajasthani, Gujarati, Marathi, Panjabi and Pahari. These, in turns, are divided into dialects or 'regional standards'. For example, Bihari Hindi is divided into three dialects—Bhojpuri, Maithili and Magahi. Gumperz (1957) discovers further variations in a 'regional standard' which he terms local dialect. The principal Dravidian languages are : Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam. Other minor Dravidian languages are : Tulu, Kodagu and a number of tribal languages such as Gondi, Toda, Kurukh Malto. The Austro-Asiatic languages are spoken by tribal people, the principal ones being Mundari, Santhali, Ho, Khasi, and Bhili. The tribals of north-eastern border areas except the Khasi speaking dialects related to the Tibetan and Burmese languages.

It has been established that the language classifi-

cations are the basis to discussions of cultural regions. In all discussions of regionalism, either political or cultural, language has been the factor most consistently taken into consideration. (Karve 1953, Cohn 1957). Risley and Sarkar as referred to above postulated a very close relation between race, languages and culture. Chatterjee (1951, 1953) relates Guha's physical types to language families and tries to determine the contribution of these language-culture groups.

#### IV

##### **Cultural Area:**

In the sphere of society and culture it has been rightly developed by Redfield and Milton Singer that Indian civilisation has a number of cultural patterns. Thinking about civilisation Redfield develops the idea of "historical geology" which fits in the study of civilisation. To quote him : "I think of the civilisation as one of a limited number of great peaks of culture or of human achievement shouldering itself upward like a mountain among hills and plains" (Redfield : 1957 : 13 p).

Milton Singer (1956) develops in more specific and contextual manner Redfield's ideas about civilisation in terms of cultural contents, social structure and personality types to bring out the regional interactions among regional traditions in the civilisational frame works of the great traditions of India. • Other researches and publications (Marriott Cohn : 1958) of this school of thought have also emphasised that in spite of the unity at a civilisati-

onal level of abstraction, in reality, a tremendous amount of diversity has also been established in the ethnic, linguistic and cultural spheres of Indian population, both at the synchronic as well as diachronic levels.

At the diachronic level, the data of archaeology point to an early differentiation of cultures in the Indian sub-continent. Krishna-Krishna Swami (1947), Movius (1943) and Sen (1960) point to a Pleistocene tool tradition found in the Northern and a Core-tool tradition found in the Southern Peninsular India.

A survey of the traits of the material culture of Indian villages (i.e. village plans, oil presses, house-types, plough, dress, bullock carts) undertaken by Anthropological Survey of India under the guidance of Prof. N. K. Bose (1961) also suggests a rough distinction between the Northern and Southern Peninsular types.

Dr. Iravati Karve's extensive researches in kinship pattern have brought to her notice two distinct systems which she calls the northern and southern kinship systems. Among many distinctive features the northern kinship organisation is based on "generation principles" while the southern kinship system is based on a "chronological order".

When it comes to trying to characterise regional areas within the major divisions of north and south India, there is little agreement. Karve, from the point of view of kinship systems, sets up a typology of twenty-nine linguistic-cultural regions (Karve 1953). Her linguistic-cultural regions are



characterised by (a) easy communication, (b) the widest extensions of marital connections, (c) folklore and higher literature, and (d) a characteristic caste structure.

Patterson develops a typology of fifteen linguistic-cultural areas taking into consideration the primary criterion of regional languages as well as a set of ten secondary factors (i) geographical features (ii) racial stocks, (iii) common historical traditions and folk heroes, (iv) common literary heritage in the regional language, folksongs, ballads, etc. (v) a distinctive set of religious cults and sects, (vi) a distinctive caste-system and social structure, (vii) distinctive forms of music, drama, art etc., (viii) distinctive diets (ix) distinctive modes of dress and ornamentation, and (x) a characteristic world view, which is hard to define but which can be felt or inferred from the behaviour (Patterson 1956).

On the basis of these primary and secondary factors within the larger framework of the Indian nation and the top-level of Indian civilisation a set of fifteen major cultural-linguistic regions (with several sub-regions and cultural-type in each), of course tentatively, may be suggested (1) Kashmir and Jammu, (2) Panjab, (3) Uttar Pradesh, (4) Bihar (5) West Bengal, (6) Assam, (7) Orissa, (8) Madhya Pradesh, (9) Rajasthan, (10) Gujrat, (11) Maharastra, (12) Andhra, (13) Mysore, (14) Kerala and (15) Tamil Nadu.

In the absence of adequate data on the primary and especially secondary criteria for the cultural

area approach, these regions, perhaps provide workable and fruitful units for further researches.

## V

### **Bihar : A case study for sub-areas and types**

Taking Bihar as a case study in this regional analysis, I shall indicate its linguistic characteristics and shall try to show how on the basis of regional dialects, cultural sub-area and cultural type can be carved out. My primary aim here will not be of a descriptive linguist but of a socio-linguist.

Bihar is one of the older States of India and linguistically it falls in the Eastern Group of the Indo-Aryan Family (Grierson : 1905). The regional language that is spoken in Bihar and the adjacent areas has been named as Bihari by Grierson. According to him, it covers an area of 90,000 square miles and is spoken by about 36,000,000 people from the Himalayas on the north to Singhbhum on the south, and from Manbhum on the southeast to Basti on the north-west.

Bihari is bounded on the north by Tibeto-Burman languages of the Himalayas, on the east by Bengali, on the south by Oriya and on the west by Chhattisghari, Bagheli, and Awadhi dialects of Eastern Hindi.

Like Bengali, Oriya and Assamese, Bihari is a direct descendent of the old form of speech known as Magadhi Prakrit. Owing to this common heritage it shares similar grammatical forms with these languages. But owing to constant ethnic,

historical and cultural contacts with the Uttar Pradesh in its west, it has been exposed to the influence of, what Grierson calls, Eastern Hindi. Today with regard to phonology, grammatical forms, and vocabulary, perhaps, Bihari occupies a middle place between Bengali and Eastern Hindi.

Bihar consists of three important regional dialects and the term, Bihari, as used by Grierson, can be understood to indicate a group of related dialects, sharing certain common characteristics (Grierson : 1905). These three main dialects are : (1) Maithili, (2) Magahi, (3) Bhojpuri. In each dialect again, there are local variations and Grierson on the basis of pronunciation and grammatical forms, has indicated three sub-dialects in each. Gumperz in a recent paper reports about dialectic differences that exist between the social groups of the same village (Gumperz : n. d.). However, without referring to these sub-dialects I shall discuss the importance of the concept of sub-areas in a cultural or regional approach.

The three dialects are spoken in the three geographical regions of Bihar and differ from each other on the phonetic, phonemic and grammatical levels. Phonetically nothing is so characteristic as its pronunciation of the vowel 'a' and of the consonant 's'. The first sounds like the 'o' in the English word 'not', and it is of frequent occurrence. This gives the predominating tone-colour of a Maithili sentence. As we go westward the broad pronunciation is gradually lost. It entirely disappears in the most westernly dialect

of Bhojpuri. As regards the 's' sound, the ancient Magadhi was unable to use the sound, and substituted for it a sound approaching that of an English 'sh'. The Maithili speaking people make special distinction between these two sounds. In general, Maithili is considered to be very sweet, womanish-speech, while the Bhojpuri is said to be very coarse, 'police-speech', and Magadhi occupies an intermediate position in the matter of such grading.

On the grammatical level, special mention may be made of the verb substantive. The verb substantive in Maithili is usually 'chhai' or 'acchi' -he is. In Magadhi, it is usually, 'hai' and in Bhojpuri it is, usually, 'bate', 'bare' or have. The three dialects all agree in forming the present tense definite by adding the very substantive to the present participle. Thus Maithili 'dekhaitacch' Magahi 'dekhait-hai', Bhojpuri, 'dekhait-bate', means, he is seeing. But Magahi has also a special form of the present, viz., 'dekha-hai' and so has Bhojpuri, 'dekhe-la', means, he sees or will see. Finally the whole system of verbal conjugation is amazingly complex in Maithili and Magahi, but it is as simple and straightforward in Bhojpuri as it is in Bengali and Hindi. There are minor differences between the three dialects but they need not detain us here. Let us come to discuss each dialect separately.

Maithili is, properly speaking, the language of Mithila. According to the Mithila Mahatmya, a Sanskrit work of considerable repute in the territory (which it describes), Mithila is the country

bounded on the north by the Himalayan Mountains, on the south by the Ganges, on the west by the river Gandak and on the east by the river Kosi. It, thus, includes the present districts of Champaran, Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga, as well as the strip of the Nepal Tarai which runs between these districts and the lower ranges of the Himalayas. It has also extended east of the river Kosi and occupies the greater part of the district of Purnea, and has moreover crossed the Ganges, and is now spoken over the whole of the south Gangetic portion of the Bhagalpur district, over the eastern portion of the south Gangetic portion of the Monghyr district, and in the north and west of the Santhal Parganas.

Maithili is the only one of the Bihari dialects which has a literary history. For centuries the Pundits of Mithila have been famous for their learning and many of their works have been written in Sanskrit. The earliest writer of Maithili of whom we have many record was the celebrated Vidyapati. He was the first of the old-master singers whose short religious poems dealing principally with Radha and Krishna exercised such an important influence on the religious history of Eastern India. Vidyapati has many imitators in Mithila itself, among whom may be mentioned Umapati, Nandipati, Ramapati, Mahapati, Jayananda, etc., who wrote volumes of devotional songs and hymns. This literary tradition was further carried by a number of Maithili dramatists and poets. During the last seventy years, Maithili has witnessed a remarkable

revival under the enlightened guidance and effective patronage of the Maharaja of Darbhanga, a Maithili Brahmin. A vast bulk of literature has been written in Maithili and during the last twenty years it has got recognition as a subject for Under Graduate teaching not only in Mithila but also outside of its region. In Calcutta, Patna and Allahabad for example, it is taught at Post-Graduate level and also for dissertations for advanced studies.

Culturally, Mithila is a region of glorious traditions and rich history which it retains to the present day. The Brahmanic way of life has always dominated this area. The Maithili Brahmins, famous for their orthodox and pious way of life throughout India, have maintained their ancestral characteristics in spite of several conquests. This Brahminical domination has left ineffacable mark upon the rest of the population. The Maithili Brahmins marry among their own caste as well as in their linguistic territory. They consider it derogatory to marry outside their linguistic territory. They are proud of their heritage, their language, their mythological heroes as well as of the sacred places that fall within their territory. However, they show great regard for places of pilgrimage that are recognised as sacred by the great Hindu traditions. Though they are located in other parts of the country, they frequently visit such religious places.

Sober and polite, orthodox and fatalist, the Maithili-speaking people are highly tradition and religion oriented. It might be of special interest to the supporters of Whorfian concept that in Maithili,

there are no words and gramatical forms to address anybody without respect and hospitality. Even the small babies, the untouchables, and persons who have committed some crime or sin are addressed in respectable terms. In the other two dialects, description of which follow, the situation is different. In Magadhi, there is practically no word for respect and 're' which is used to refer to inferior persons in the Bhojpuri, is very frequently used in Magadhi.

### **Magadhi or Magahi sub-area:**

Magahi is originally the language of the people inhabiting the ancient kingdom of Magadha (now often called Magah) corresponding to what is at present day, roughly speaking, the district of Patna, together with the northern half of the district of Gaya. It contained at different times three famous capital cities. The oldest was Rajgriha, the modern village Rajgir and its most celebrated king was Jarsandha who ruled over the central part of India. In the middle of the sixth century B. C. it was ruled by Bimbisara, famous as a patron of Buddhism. Bimbisara's son and successor founded the city of Pataliputra (now known as Patna) which, later became the capital of Magadh in succession to Rajgriha. Here, in the later half of the third century B. C., were the headquarter of the Great Asoka under whom Buddhism was finally adopted as the State religion. In the two districts of Patna and Gaya Magadhi in some form or the other is spoken.

Magadhi, as the native language, however, is not confined to the country of Magadha only. It is also spoken all over the rest of Gaya and the district of Hazaribagh ; also in the west in a portion of the district of Palamau, and on the east in the portion of the districts of Monghyr and Bhagalpur and in Dhanbad district in the south-east. Over the whole of this area it is practically one and the same dialect, even though there are some local variations.

Near the City of Patna it is full of idioms belonging to the North-Western Provinces because of the strong Muslim influence which inhabit that town. On the eastern border, Magadhi meet Bengali. The two languages do not combine but the meeting is a bilingual one where they live side by side. Actually this marks the area of linguistic transition and recently, on the recommendation of the States Reorganisation Commission, the Government of India transferred a portion of it to West Bengal, the Bengali-speaking State.

Magadhi has no indigenous written literature. There are many popular songs current throughout the area in which the language is spoken, and strolling-bards recite various long epic poems which are known, more or less, all over the whole of North India. One of these songs is the Songs of Gopi Chandra which has been published by Grierson, with an English translation in the "Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal" (Grierson : 1855). Portions of another popular folksong, known as Lorik, has been published, in Notes of the "District



Gazetteers of Gaya". The missionaries have published a series of Christian literature including the Bible in Magadhi. During the last ten years, a band of Magadhi scholars are making efforts to revive Magadhi. They have collected huge folk songs which are being published. An organisation has also been formed to collect old manuscripts and a journal of Magadhi is being published from Patna. However, at the present time, it is not considered as an effective dialect as the other two, Maithili and Bhojpuri.

Both Magadha as a seat of ancient Hindu kings, and Magadhi as their State language are well-known. But their old pride and heritage appear to be lost as they were exposed to Muslim influence directly, and Magadha was subject to headquarters of the Muslim provinces. These days, Magadhi is condemned by speakers of other Indian languages as being rude and uncouth like the people who use it. In fact, the principal difference between it and Maithili is that the later has been under the influence of learned Brahmans for centuries while the former has been the language of the people who have been dubbed 'a boor, low and uncultured' since the Vedic times (Atharva Veda v. xxii). Moreover this area has always been the cockpit of foreign invasions and could not develop and maintain its ancient glory. To an Indian, one of its most objectionable features is its habit of winding up every question even when addressed to a person held in respect with the word 're'. In other parts of India this word is used in

addressing inferior or younger people or when speaking contemptuously.

We do not have much data to demonstrate the differences in customs and manners of these three sub-groups. But even superficial observation gives an impression of the regional specialisation. Owing to geographical bottle-necks, linguistic differentiation and regional cultural traditions, there is seldom any case of marriage relations between the Magadhi-speaking people and the Maithili. The Magadhi also practise regional endogamy. Only in the last twenty years a few inter-regional marriages have been noted.

### **Bhojpuri : sub-area**

Bhojpuri is 'properly speaking', the language of Bhojpur, the name of a town and Pargana in the north-west of the district of Shahabad. It is a place of some importance in the modern history of India. The town was the original headquarters of the Dumraon King and the famous battle of Buxar was fought a few miles west of it.

The language called after Bhojpur has spread far beyond its limits. It reaches on the north, across the Ganges, and even beyond the Nepal frontier, up to the lower ranges of the Himalayas from Champaran to Basti. On the south, it has crossed the Soan and covered the great Ranchi plateau of Chotanagpur, where it finds itself in contact with Bengali of Manbhum, with Oriya of Singhbhum and with the scattered tribal languages of Chotanagpur plateau.

The area covered by Bhojpuri is, in round number, some fifty thousand square miles. At home, it is spoken by some 20,000,000 people as compared with the 6,235,782 who speak Magahi and the 10,000,000 who speak Maithili. Therefore, from the point of view of number of people speaking it, it is much more important than the other two Bihari dialects put together.

Bhojpuri has hardly any indigenous literature. A few books have been printed in it. Grierson has published its grammar and compared it with other regional dialects. The famous epic poem *Ailaha Uddal* has also witnessed publication. Numerous folksongs and tales are current over the Bhojpuri area and some of them have been collected by both the foreign and Indian scholars and folklorists.

The Bhojpuri speaking country is inhabited by a people curiously different from the other two groups who speak Bihari dialects. They form the fighting or warrior group of India. Mostly, they are the Rajputs (Kshatriya), who according to tradition are specialists in war, and give protection to other Varnas or castes. An alert and active group, dearly loving a fight for fighting's sake, they have spread all over Northern India, each man ready to carve his fortune out of any opportunity which may present itself to him. They furnish a rich mine of recruitment to the army and the police, and they took a very prominent part in the First Indian War of Independence in 1857.

These people have penetrated into the big cities and towns of India and provided services as watchmen, police, protection force and army. With them they have brought their simple but virile dialect, Bhojpuri, which has become very popular among these professional groups and are spoken by them though, they may not belong to the native area of Bhojpuri. Opler, Cohn, Planalp. Singh, have studied some villages in the Bhojpuri speaking areas and they have noticed the amount of feuds, rivalry, boldness, and virility that characterise this area. It is left for the linguist to establish the relationship between their language and culture: it remains to be studied, how far 'code influences cognition or vice versa'.

### **Tribal sub-area:**

In addition to the Bihari language in the North and South Bihar, geographically, ethnically and linguistically distinct part of Chotanagpur is characterised by tribal languages of Mundari and Dravidian families.

This Linguistic population of the tribals concentrated in once the isolated districts of Bihar constitute another sub-area. The analysis of cultural area in Bihar with more or less subsistence economy, animistic rituals, primitive customs, and above all a distinct style of living and world view need to be discussed scientifically.

The tribal population of Bihar, in Eastern India, is concentrated in the southern part of the State which is predominantly a hilly and forested plateau. The tribal belt of Bihar, is geologically one

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continuous unit of Chotanagpur and the Rajmahal plateau and covers the administrative districts of Ranchi, Hazaribagh, Palamau, Dhanbad, Singhbhum and the Santhal Parganas. According to the 1961 census, about four million tribal people inhabit these districts, which is approximately 30 per cent of the total population of the area. In some of these districts, namely, Ranchi (60 per cent), the Santhal Parganas (44 per cent), and Hazaribagh (36 per cent) the tribal population is high. The 1951 census report enumerates forty-five tribes of various sizes that inhabit these districts of Bihar but in the later censuses, 24 tribes have been declared as Scheduled Tribes. Sporadically, they are also scattered throughout some of the other districts which may be ignored for the present. Some of the more important of these tribes are the Santhal (15,534,646), the Oraon (638,490), the Munda (519,743), the Ho (349,645), the Bhumij (152,992), the Kharia (88,777), the Savaria Paharia (68,654), the Asur (4,388) and the Birhor (2,499).

Racially these tribes have been classified as Proto-Australoid (Guha : 1944) and linguistically most of the tribal languages except Kurukh and Malto, are of Mundari-group. A comprehensive study of their cultural ecology, technology, level of socio-cultural integration and above all the nature-man-spirit complex, these tribes, have been classified into four cultural types: (1) Forest Hunting type, (2) Hill-Cultivation type, (3) Plains-Agriculture type and (4) Simple Artisan type.

While it is not possible to go into the ethnograp-

hic details of each type, which, of course, have been done elsewhere (Vidyarthi : 1958), it may however be pointed out that the terms used for classification indicate roughly the ecological environment as well as the economic occupation of each type. With each type goes a particular types of settlement pattern and socio-cultural integration.

To conclude then, the paper emphasises the importance of area approach for correct understanding of the unity and varieties of Indian civilisation in all its complexities. The hurried review of the classification researches on the racial, linguistic and cultural characteristics of Indian population establish certain overlapping areas of the distribution of race, language and culture. With the case study of Bihar as one of the cultural-linguistic areas, the study establishes a set of primary and secondary criteria for determining such a cultural area, cultural sub-area and cultural-type. The paper also refers to the applicability of the cultural, ecological approach to the study of tribal groups living in the same geographic regions but having contrasting environments. It is also hoped that this general frame work and methodology, applicable to the study of Bihar cultural area, may prove applicable for a similar study in other parts of India, with certain appropriate modification, wherever necessary.

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# Folklore Researches in Bihar

By

**Pasupati Prasad Mahato**

This is a bibliographical study of folklore. We start with an account of folktales.

## **Folktales :**

In Tribal Bihar, however, like the other States of India, the vanguard of folktale researches are missionaries and able administrators. Bihar, specially Tribal Bihar, has got a rich heritage in folklore. It is an attempt to describe in brief the folkloristic activities of this State. This study is divided into the following parts :

- (a) Researches in folktales
- (b) Researches in folksongs.
- (c) Researches in riddles and proverbs.

It should be emphasised that the collection of folktale has not attracted the concern of the folklorists in Bihar. Our survey reveals that except some sporadic publications of a few tales here and there, we do not have a scientific collection of folktales published in Magahi, Maithili or Bhojpuri.

Among the unpublished materials brought out to our knowledge, mention may be made of a collection of 300 folktales in Bhojpuri by Sri Ganesh Chaubey from the district of Champaran.

Rev. F. T. Cole is said to be the first researcher in exploring folktales of Santhali. His article, 'Santhal Folklore', is published in (*Indian Antiquary*,

vol. 4,) 1875. There he dealt with two folktales of Santhals (Cole, E. T. 1875), in January issue—"Toria the Goatherd and the Daughter of the Sun" and in September issue he made a study to that tale which is entitled as 'The tale of Karan and Guju the two brothers.' These stories are not supported with the original texts, they were only the literal and free translations.

A. Campbell made the first attempt in collecting the Santhal folklore, specially folktales. Campbell in his first epoch making book, 'Santhal Folktales' (Campbell, A. 1891) said that the tales he had collected are of two types : (a) purely Santhal in origin, and (b) the tales obtained from other sources. The first one is of the indigenous sources showing superstitions as regards the creation of myth, mythical foods, social customs and usages. The second class of tales embraces a large number of popular tales prevalent among the Hindus. The tales were collected in Santhali at first hand and were translated into English later on. Every care had been taken while translating so that it may not impair the value inherent in the stories. The author claims to make the Santhal folktales (in their English dress) true to the fresh and hills of vicinity.

In the first part of his book (Campbell, A., 1916) Campbell records the myths and traditions with regard to the creation of the earth, fauna and flora of the life, the genesis, migration of the Santhals from their classical home to the present country. One hundred nine and different stories are given in part II, fourteen animal and bird stories are given in

part III, twenty four stories, which are scarcely folklore, but anecdotes relating to Santhal life, are given. In part IV, twelve stories dealing with Bongas and the men have taken place. In part V, there are fourteen legends and traditions and a few notes relating to tribal customs. In part VI, twelve stories relating to witchcraft and witch-beliefs are available.

Next important book was compiled by G. H. Bompas which is popularly known as 'Folktales of the Santhals'. It is a voluminous translation of the Santhali folktales.

Eminent ethnographer and the 'Indian father of ethnology', as Hutton said, S. C. Roy, devoted some of the chapters of his later monographs to the study of folklore. "The Mundas and their Country" (Roy, S. C. 1912) made a turning point in the anthropological literature of India. In tracing the origin and history of the Mundas and Oraons, he took resort to the oral source. In addition to his collection of tales, myths and legends, he appended the vocabularies of the tribes in the monographs like the Birhor, the Oraon and the Kharia.

S. C. Roy in his full length article, "The Divine Myths of Mundas", published in the *Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, vol. II, 1916, Part II mainly dealt with cosmological belief of the Mundas. (Roy, S. C. 1916). Here he said that the few legends which some old Mundas still recount about the mythical adventures of their gods are like legends amongst other savages or barbarous races. This is characterised by a belief morphosis and generally by a confusion of all things in an equality

of presumed animation and intelligence. He had classified the myths in two headings : (a) myths regarding the principal deities, and (b) miscellaneous myths or superstitions regarding the minor spirits. In the first case, he dealt with four myths and in the next eleven stories were dealt with. The stories were placed in literal translation and devoid of original texts. In 1921, Roy founded "Man-in-India", a Quarterly journal, where he worked till his death as the founder editor. This journal served the cause of folklore effectively.

Sukumar Haldar in his article 'Ho Folklore' from 1916 to 1917 dealt with Ho folktales. He published thirty folktales in the *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, from vol. I-II part III, 1916 to vol. IV, part III, 1917. Only the word by word translation of the Ho tales were given there. These stories were devoid of original texts, no cultural reflection were given. (Haldar, S. 1916-1917).

H. D. Christian in his article 'Some Stories Current in Hazaribagh regarding Luga Baba, dealt with a local deity (Christian, H. D. 1921). He said that Luga Baba was a local deity of Hazaribagh. But Luga Baba was equally well-known amongst the Mundas of Ranchi. He then gave the word by word literal translation of the legend that he collected, which was, of course, interesting. A few local terminologies were also given at the end of the paper.

M. B. Bhaduri tried to study the astronomy of the Mundas and their star myths (Bhaduri, M. B. 1922) in his article 'Astronomy of the Mundas and Their Star Myths'. The hypothesis propounded

by Tylor appears to be true with the myths and legends of Mundas of Chotanagpur. The Oraons believe that the world and the belt were first shaped in the Licaven by their Singbonga from their plough and plough share. The 'great bear' is the 'Prakomb Kumripil' on which the Singbonga relaxed at night. Moreover, he described the legends of star as woven round. He also touched the ideas of the Mundas as to why there is no star in the daytime.

S. C. Mitra was one of the towering figures in exploring folklore in India, specially in Bihar. Mitra, in a series of articles published in different journals, explored different types of folklore of various tribes. In his 'Notes on Birhor legend about Ravan's abduction of Sita', he dealt with a legend of the most primitive nomadic tribe—'Birhor of Chotanagpur'. The oppositeness of the epithet *rakshoghna* is strikingly illustrated in the Birhor legend. In this traditional story, it is narrated that before Rama and Lakshmana went out a hunting, the later gave to his sister-in-law, Sita, a handful of charmed mustered seeds. The story revealed how Ravan was burnt into ashes by Sita. The story further speak of the Hinduised reflection on a tribe. The story is not given in original text but is found in translation.

Mitra in his article 'A note on Human Sacrifice among the Birhors of Chotanagpur' dealt with a legend regarding human sacrifice. The customs existed among the Birhors of offering human sacrifice to the water spirit was also evidenced by their

folklore. Mitra provided with many interesting specimens. One of these entitled 'How the Dead and Burried Children of the Raja were Restored to Life.'

In the same volume, Mitra "On a Birhor Folktale of the Wicked Queen Type" said that the story provided radical ideas of the Birhors. Though he modified the story yet he maintained the spirit. No original text is found, only the translation is given.

Mitra in another article 'On a Ho Folklate of the Wicked Queen Type'—dealt with one story of the Hos of Singhbhum (Mitra, S. C. 1926). He in this gave the translated form of a widely popular story "The King and the Seven Ranis" (Queens). The story was narrated in a very generalised manner. Only by this story he described the culture of Hos thus it was sketchy.

Mitra in another article—'Further notes on a Ho Folktale of the Wicked Queen Type' made a comparative analysis with Ho and Santhals (Mitra, S. C. 1928). In this he had just compared the same type of tales of Santhals of the Santhal Parganas and Hos of Singhbhum. He took the help of the Santhali folktale from 'Folklore of Santhal Parganas' by Bompas. Comparing the two tales he gave the cultural reflection that women ate fruits and other things for procuring children in the lower culture group. The original text of the stories are absent only the translations are given.

In the same year Campbell in his article entitled "Santhal Legends" (Campbell, A. 1916) presented us four legends. These legends are very much interesting but there too we find no original texts.



Some significant Publications on the Santals have been made by two Hindi writers—Sri Doman Sahu ‘Samir’ and Sri Umasankar. Sri ‘Samir’ who edits a Santali Magazine—‘Hor Sambad’—has written about the life and culture of the Santals as well as of their folklore in Hindi language. In the book ‘Santal Sanskritiki Ruparekha’, 1966, written by Sri Umasankar an integrated and wholesome picture of the Santal rituals and ceremonies are available.

C. H. Bompas is a significant name who was an explorer of tribal-lore of Bihar. Bompas in his article ‘Folklore of Kolhan’, appeared in the *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal* vol. 71, 1902, part III, mainly deals with Ho Folklore (Bompas, C. H.). The Kolhan forms the Western half of the district of Singhbhum in Chotanagpur. The Hos or the Larka Hos who form the bulk of the inhabitants of the area are a branch of the Mundas of Chotanagpur. They belong to one of those Kolharin tribes of which the Santals are perhaps best known. Bompas further said that he had made no attempt to put the stories (which he had collected) into literary dress. He merely brought them as a few stories to the hands of the builders who build the structure of comparative mythology. He presented us twenty two stories, though they are not classified. The stories are devoid of original text, yet the presentation is scientific one because they contain useful notes.

C. H. Bompas in his voluminous and alarming book, “Folklore of the Santal Parganas” dealt with all-round folktales of Santals (Bompas, C. H., 1909). In the Preface, Bompas said that ‘the Santals are a

Munda tribe, a branch of that aboriginal element which probably entered India from the North-East. At the present day they are inhabitants of the eastern outskirts of the Chutia Nagpur plateau'. Originally hunters and dwellers in the jungle, they are still but indifferent agriculturists. Like the Mundas and Hos and other representatives of the race; they are jovial in character, fond of rice beer and ready to make jokes. Their religion is animistic, spirits (*bongas*) are everywhere around them. Bompas admitted that the stories and legends which he had published in book form were taken from Rev. P. O Bodding, D. D. of the Scandinavian Mission to the Santal. To be perfectly sure that neither language nor ideas should in any way be influenced by contact with European mind, he arranged for most of them to be written in Santali.

Mitra in the 'Cosmological Myths of the Birhors and its Santali and American Indian Parallels' made a comparative analysis. (Mitra, S. C., 1927-1928). A cosmological or creation myth has been defined through a legend or a story which accounts for the creation of the world and the existence of the universe, the origin of mankind, beasts, birds, and other animals and of trees and plants and for the cause of the destruction of the race and species and so forth. He then gave a story of the creation of the world of the Birhors. He also had pointed out the similarities and dissimilarities with the Santali folk-tale and American Indian folktale on creation of earth.

Mitra in 'A Note on the Prevalence of Cannibalism among Birhors of Chotanagpur' (Mitra S.C.—1927

—29a) said that cannibalism is found in the folklore of Birhor. Some colour of plausibility is lent to the foregoing opinion by the fact that there is, at least, one Dravidian tribe namely the Birhor now living in Chotanagpur, whose folktales are potent with such fact as that, in some far off time, they practised cannibalism, that is to say, they used to feed the flesh of human beings.

Mitra in 'Notes on Some Mundari Legends and Customs connected with the Origin of the Name of Ranchi and some of its Suburbs', mainly dealt with the origin of the word Ranchi. (Mitra, S.C.—1927-28b). As a result of enquiry he found that the place name Ranchi and its suburbs has derived from some interesting legends and customs of the Mundas, who with the Oraons, are one of the aboriginal inhabitants of Ranchi, Hazaribagh and Manbhum districts. Mitra is of the opinion that the origin of the word Ranchi came from a Mundari word 'Alachi' or stick. Alachi < Arachi < Ranchi. Secondly, the origin of place name Pakhra and thirdly the origin of the place name Doranda and lastly Hindpir—all have come from Mundari stock. He was quite successful in giving the philological derivation of Mundari legend on the origin of the name of Ranchi. He only gave the English translation of the legend. He gave the local Mundari terminologies but not their English synonyms.

Mitra in his studies on plant myth no.1, "On an etymological myth about the night flowering Jessamine", never mentioned the legend of it, but he simply kept aside the fact that the myth belongs to a tribe or

caste. As a whole, it is a most rudimentary work. Yet he said that the root idea lying at the basis of these myths in the savage belief that souls of dead men, the different parts of dead persons, may grow up into trees or blossom as flowers. The conception is common in folklore and in poetry, original text is absent.

Mitra 'On a far travelled Star Myth', (Mitra S.C. —1928 d) said that primitive men considered the sun, the moon, the stars to be as anthropomorphic beings endowed with human sentiments and activities and possessed a will-power. Mitra quotes F. Boas's theory of the 'Parallelism of Cultural Development' which to quote his words has been expounded as follows : "different groups of mankind started at a very early time from a general condition of lack of culture; and owing to the unity of the human mind and the consequent similar response to outer and inner stimuli, they have developed everywhere approximately along the same lines. makes similar inventions and developing similar customs and beliefs".

A landmark is made with a number of publication by Rev. Father P. O. Bodding. The most outstanding work by this Swedish Missionary is "Santal Folktales" in three volumes (Bodding, P. O., 1925). It is inclusive of fifteen stories about Jackels, nine about the Women, thirty seven Humorous stories, six stories on Ogres, five stories concerning Jugis, six stories of Souls and Human Bodies, two stories about the animals born by women, and thirteen miscellaneous tales, providing a grand total

of ninety three. These tales are claimed to be as genuine since they were noted down by a Santal whose horizon was limited only to Santal country and Santal traditions. These tales bear testimony of the angle of vision and characteristics of the Santals. The characters portrayed in these stories can easily be identified as the Santals and not as the Hindus. Through these stories the people speak to us without the aid of an interpreter and one has simply to listen and concentrate on what one says. If they are properly analysed, these stories will reveal the relation of the tribes and non-tribes and in contributing to the rich heritage of the two. These tales have close relation with *Panchatantra*, *Bratakatha*, etc. which were composed by their forefathers who inhabited in the South India. They were known either as Colarians or Dravidians to whom Santals are related. This can well be ascertained by the presence of jackel tales in Hindu classical literature as well as among the Santali literature. The twenty two stories show how different tales and motifs can be combined into one. The process of Aryanization in these tales, especially the domestication of animals, are distinguished by indigeneous Santali words. The Aryan derivations are largely found in the articles of food and in dress. The names of many implements and the technology used in trade, calculation of time, various notions regarding administrations and law, all these are taken by the Santals from non-Santal stock. Their sentences contain many foreign elements, and most of the grammatical principles are taken from outside. The

author fears that the Santali dialect will so cease to exist, since even at the time of author's work most of the Santals were bilingual.

Bodding published another collection of tales exclusively dealing with 'Santal Witchcraft' (Bodding, 1926) and 'Santal and Their Disease' (Bodding-1925). The translation is somewhat condensed, but is very literal. It includes eight stories which are connected with the institution of witchcraft and sorcery. The other book is divided mainly into two parts. The first part treats with medicine, their administration, application on the Santal disease, while the second part comprises ideas as to the origin and causations of disease, the superstitions, the fear institution, witch-doctor's '*mantras*' and so on. His attitude towards the Bonga world seems to be influenced by the ideas of those from where the Santals have borrowed.

Kanku Deogam (Ho) has published one Ho folk story. It is the story of a fox eating foetus. The original text is given in Roman script with word by word translation in English. It is a good specimen of such research work (Deogam, K., 1928).

A. Grignard in his significant publication 'Hahn's Oraon Folklore in the Original,' deals with Oraon folklore in a critical way (Grignard, A. 1931) It is the edited volume of F. Hahn's publication of Oraon legend published in 1905 by late F. Hahn of the G. E. L. Mission. He said that while editing Hahn's publication, he did not change the original text. The author in his introductory note dealt with 'A Short Account of the

Oraon customs'. He, at first, gave the account of the Oraon customs, then account of the tribe and the Oraon village, village life, village lands, the Oraon house, family events, customary crops, rain beliefs and superstition, etc. In the title 'Tales and Stories', the author gave the original text in Roman script and of forty one stories in English translated form. He gave the original text in the cases of religious myth and same has happened with tribal traditions, domestic events, and tribal festivals. The work provided a capital document for all the students of language. The literary translation and notes facilitate the English reading researchers and people.

R. Carstairs (Carstairs, R. 1931), the Deputy Commissioner of Santal Parganas held the administrative post among the Santals for fourteen years. He was mainly responsible for the foundation of the Santal system of customary code. He wrote the first novel on the themes of the tribal life in 1855. Harmr was the hero of Santal, standing as a pioneer, who had faced a lot of trial and tribulations in his daily life. He was compelled to share such a state of affair in which except the revolt no way was out. In fact, the book depicts the Santal relationship with the alien administrators in the guise of the story. In addition to be the first novelist adopting the theme of primitive life, the author's insight understanding and attitude towards tribal life was friendly.

P. K. Mitra published one story 'Haram Buria Kinga Kahani : a Munda Folktale' (Mitra P.K.-1938). The original text in Roman script and its free line by line translation was given there.

W. G. Griffiths in his 'Folklore of the Kol's' presents us nineteen different types of stories. (Griffiths, W.G.-1944). In the census report Kols are listed amongst the primitive tribes in three areas; in the Central Indian Agency, in the Central Provinces and in the United Provinces. Although they have lost their tribal language and speak now in Hindusthani which is prevalent in the area where they reside. They belong to the proto-Australoid group of people.

The most primitive Kols are forest dwellers but on the whole they are serfs, owning no land, and usually are engaged as field coolies, stone-breakers, burden-bearers and the like. They are good workmen, honest and straightforward. No trace of a bard or a professional storyteller was found amongst them. The best account is usually found when the story incidentally comes up. The author did not mention about the region from where he had collected the stories. No original text is found in the book, only free literal translations are given.

Uma Guha published a number of 'Creation Myths of the Santals' (Guha, Uma-1958) in 'Indian Folklore' which shed lights on early migration as well as world vision of the Santals. The authoress collected five folktales of Santals from the Santal Parganas which have not yet been included in any authoritative folktale collection. These tales are mostly concerned with the animals like the cow, bitch, rat and monkey.

Bhagaban Chandra 'Binod' in his Hindi—'Kar Bhala, Hoga Bhala'; Maithili—'Ki Lok Kathaye'



gave eighteen different types of stories (Binode, B.C.-1960). The author classified the folktales of Mithila in fourteen different heads. All the stories are in Hindi version. Only one story which is entitled as 'Chariyar' is given in the original text in Devnagri script but this is devoid of translation. He did not mention the place of his research.

### **Folksong**

The poetry and music are the spontaneous product of the primitive souls. Apart from the folktales and legends, Bihar has got a rich heritage in folksong.

Among the contemporary folksong compilers of Bihar mention may be made of Dr. Biswanath Prasad who gave impetus to folklore researches in Bihar through Bihar Rashtra Bhasha Parisad, Patna. In addition to encouraging a number of scholars in the field, he himself has edited a volume,—'Magahi Sanskar Git', which has been published by the Rashtra Bhasha Parisad in the year 1962. It is a collection of ritualistic songs which has been made useful by analytical notes. The text as well as the learned introduction dealing with the postulate of folklore of Bihar are interesting. Another work completed by him in collaboration with Dr. Sudhakar Jha is the Linguistic Survey of Sadar Subdivision of Manbhum and Dhalbhum published in 1958 by the Rashtra Bhasha Parisad. Here the songs of several languages and dialects have been illustrated with examples from Kurmali, Khotta, Santali and Mundari groups of people.

Another scholar of Magahi and the editor of a Magahi magazine, Dr. Ramnandan has rendered a valuable service to Magahi folklore by publishing a collection of Magahi folksongs. The book has been published by Bihar Magahi Mandal. It is just the collection of songs which could have been more useful if the compiler analysed the songs in terms of social and cultural contents. Dr. Nageswar Sharma is a well-known scholar of Magahi who got D. Phil. on Magahi ballads from Bhagalpur University.

Among the publication of Maithili songs special mention may be made to 'Maithili Lokgeet' compiled by Ramekbal Singh 'Rakesh'. The book has been published in 1942 by Hindi Sahitya Samachar, Prayag. It contains explanatory notes with a long introduction. Sri 'Rakesh' being a literary scholar has made a poetic appreciation to the study of Maithili folksong.

Another unique collection - 'Koshi Geet' deserves to be mentioned. The book contains 45 folksongs about various roles and nature of the river Koshi. The compiler, Sri Brajeswar Mallick deserves the appreciation of folklorists for his valuable contribution. Mrs. Anima Sinha got D. Phil. from the University of Calcutta for her research on Maithili folksongs.

A number of folklorists have worked on Bhojpuri folksongs. Among them mention may be made of W. G. Archer, Durga Sankar Prasad Singh, Ganesh Chaubey, Sreedhar Mishra and a few others. Archer with the assistance of Sankata Prasad published a

collection of folksongs which is entitled as *Bhojpuri Gramgeet*. The volume includes 377 folksongs under various meaningful categories, but the readers' thirst are there for a certain explanatory notes on the cultural aspects of these folksongs. The book has been written in Devnagri script and was published in the year 1943. It is well-known as a popular collection among the womenfolk. Though the collection was made through the women informants from the Kayastha families of Sahabad district, it represents in general, the folksongs of the entire Bhojpuri area. However, one notes the absence of folksongs related to the sacred thread ceremony which are so numerous and so important among the families of twice born castes.

Another compilation of poetic nature was made by Durgasankar Prasad Singh. His book is entitled as 'Bhojpuri Lokgeetomen Karunras'. The book was published in 1944 by Hindi Sahitya Samachar, Prayag. Along with his own collection of the Bhojpuri folksongs of Sahabad district, the compiler has also included quite a large number of folksongs from Ramnaresh Tripathi's earlier collection entitled as *Gramgeet* published in 1929. The compiler claims that the songs already collected by Tripathi needed their reprint with certain important modifications in the text.

An important scholar of Bhojpuri folksong is Ganesh Chaubey who made a valuable contribution to the analysis of Bhojpuri songs from cultural points of view. His papers on the depiction of flowers, ornaments, dresses, pictorial art, seasons,

sacred thread ceremonies, and peacock etc. are quite refreshing and meaningful.

The social element in the Bhojpuri folksongs are the subject matter of the Doctoral Thesis of Sreedhar Mishra. It is a full-length work in sociological nature in Bhojpuri folksong. Here, in several chapters, the author treats social, cultural, economic, political and religious life of the Bhojpurias as reflected in the folksongs.

Rakhaldas Halder in his—'An introduction to the Mundari Language' published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. 40, Part No. 1 to 111, 1871 gave a short description of the oral literature of the Mundas. He said that the Mundari is a dialect of the language which was at one time universally spoken of by the aboriginal inhabitants (Halder, R. D., 1871). The aboriginal tongue is now to be met with in the western highland comprising Birbhum, Manbhum, Singhbhum and in Ranchi of the Chotanagpur plateau and in some parts of Central India. Its various forms are known as Santali, Ho, Mundari, Korwas, Kuri etc. which we know from the linguists. He then gave the local vocabularies and their nearest English synonyms.

Rasbehari Bose in his article—'Legends and Ballads connected with persons deified or dead in great veneration of Bhagalpur and the neighbouring districts' gave one legend and two ballads (Bose, R.B.,-1371). The legend of Dube Bhairam, and the ballad of Lurik and Laika, are given in English translation, no trace of original text in any script are found.

J. M. Mitchell gave fourteen wedding songs which he collected attending in the marriage ceremonies of Munda-Kols, and from the German scholar Rev. Jelling Hahn's. The author mentioned that his translations are literal, but poorly represent the harmony of the original. The songs are printed in English poetic forms. (Mitchell, J. M. 1875).

In November 1875, Mitchell in the same volume of *Indian Antiquary* published 'Santali Songs' with translations and notes. He presented, with original text in Roman script, sixteen songs and gave the translations of them. He, by producing the songs, tried to show the evidence of the language that proves inconstantly the close connection of the Munda-Kols and the Santals (Mitchell-1875a).

Rev. F. T. Cole in his 'The Rajmahal Hillmen's Songs', published in *Indian Antiquary*, 1876, mainly dealt with the folksongs of Paharias of Rajmahal Hills (Cole, F.T.-1866). In the Introduction, Rev. Cole said that Colonel Dalton in his interesting work—"The Ethnology of Bengal" says, 'I nowhere find any description of the dance or the song of the Paharis'. For this reason the author collected eight folksongs of different kind, chiefly from the Paharia young men, who are being trained as school masters. He at first gave original text in Roman script and then their translations. He did not classify the types of the songs. He said that it was very noticeable that the Paharias of the Rajmahal districts are not so fond of singing and dancing as those of their counterpart in the south. And he said that

a great many of their songs are sung extempore, and composed by the singers on the spot.

G. A. Grierson is one of the great names in the linguistic researches in India. He, in his 'Some Bhojpuri Folksongs', published in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. 18, 1886, dealt with different types of Bhojpuri folksongs. He gave thirty nine different songs there including one,—Jutsar, and four,—Gattosongs. All are in original text and are printed in Devnagri script with the foot-notes on local terminologies. The translations are lucid, the way of presenting the songs are scientific. (Grierson, G.A.-1886).

Rev. Father J. S. Hoffmann in his 'Mundari Poetry, Music and Dance' finds that the Mundari poetry and songs are full of life and vitality (Hoffmann, J. S.-1907). Most of the songs are found on duet in which groups of boys and girls sing one after another. The Mundari poetry, music and dances are highly interwoven with one another and cannot be studied separately. The language itself appears to have neglected the capacity for the expression of highly abstract thought. The words are vague and a few sentences are there on tribal circumstances for perfect intelligibility.

S. C. Mitra in his three pages article, 'Santali Life in a Santali Folksong' tried to reveal the simplicity of the Santals. (Mitra, S.C.-1924). He said that the Santals who belong to the great Dravidian population of southern India now inhabit the hilly forests of the Santal Parganas, in the western outskirts of Bengal. These Santals

are very fond of singing and dancing. One of their favourite dances is the Jhumur in which a band of young women hold each other's hand and dance and sing to the accompaniment of the strains of the 'Madol'—drums—and flutes which are played upon by a band of Santal young men. He collected many folksongs and published some of that in Bengali monthly *Prabasi* (1923) and in elsewhere. Mitra in his remarks said that folksongs provide us a few glimpses of the home life of the Santals who live in the villages and hamlets of the countryside. The translations of these songs which he collected are very nice but original songs are absent.

Mitra while writing the article —'Folklore Notes from the Northern India' collected materials mainly from Newspaper—'The Bihar Herald'. He told us about the Juggler's ghost that stops the train, also about the witchcraft of south Bihar, and murder made by spirits and ghosts, including phenomenal wonder etc. The title of the essay is—Folklore Notes, but he never mentioned a single line of the Folklore of Northern India (Mitra, S. C. 1934). A detailed bio-bibliographical note on Mitra may be had in Sankar Sen Gupta's "Folklorists of Bengal", Vol. I., Calcutta, 1965.

W. G. Archer had been an administrator in different sub-divisions of Ranchi district. He is responsible for the publication of a number of anthologies of Oraon Poetry. The first one is—'The Blue Grove, the Poetry of Oraons'. The compiler in this book intended to convey as much as possible their beauty. Very systematically he discussed about

the relation of songs to social activities (Archer, W. G.-1940). Moreover, it also throws light on the problems like the intelligibility of primitive songs. Many marriage songs were collected in the the sub-division of Gumla from 1934 to 37. In most of the cases the language of conversation has been the Oraon, but in the parts of Gumla sub-division they speak a debased mixture of Oraon and Hindu. The classification of Oraon grouping has been made scientifically and faithfully, without such an analysis of Oraon poetry was meaningless. The author has been able to collect one thousand nine hundred thirty three poems of different groups of the Oraons and two hundred thirty riddles from them.

The 'Blue Grove' has been supplemented with the Oraon poetry in the 'Dove' and 'The Leopard', and 'More Oraon Poetry' (Archer, W.G.-1948). The book contains four hundred and nine poems and one hundred and forty riddles. Prior to 1938, he has used only his own collection of Oraon songs and those published in Hahn's 'Kurukh Folklore'. In 1940-41, he published a vernacular text comprising all the three collections with two thousands eight hundred and sixty songs and four hundred and forty riddles. From that text 'The Dove' and 'The Leopard' have been translated. The songs were collected from the western half of the district of Ranchi.

His field of collection was the Gumla sub-division. Hahn and Dharamdas Lakra collected their songs from the locality around Lohardaga. More new poetry and further enquiries have con-



vinced that the premarital sex relations are much the rule with the Oraons as with other tribes of Bihar. The author is concerned with drawing an attention to symbols and to classify the imaginary pictures by reference to other forms of middle and eastern India.

Archer made an intensive study of society specially on poetry and dance of the Santals in the district of Santal Parganas. His researches were carried through Santali language, among about eight lakh Santals of the Santal Parganas.

After the expiry of S. C. Roy, W. G. Archer accepted the editorship of *Man-in-India*. He was biased in folklore study and thereby the magazine began to allot more space on folk-poetry. Volume one of 1943 was exclusively devoted to the folk-poems except a few caste poems by Russel and Hiralal. From December 1942 to December 1946 he worked among the Santals of Santal Parganas for collecting folk-poetry and other materials on song and dance which he published in *Man in-India*.

In Decembr 1942 issue of *Man-in-India* Archer contributed nine Oraon poems of the Sahrul festival (Archer, W. G.-1942). On the same issue he contributed fourteen Oraon marriage poems. In the same issue Archer moved to another area of research. His seasonal songs of Patna District are mainly based on caste songs. Again he gave the literal translations of six poems which are called 'Chaumasa', a cycle of songs which one sings during the rainy season. It covers six months of the rainy season. These songs are sung by the ladies in the house of Bhumiya Brahmins, Kayasthas and Rajputs. The theme of

the cycle is sexual frustration, a theme which almost all folk-poetry in India connects with the rains. No original text is found, only literal translation of the songs are given.

Archer in his 'More Santal Songs' (Archer, W.G.-1944) presents before us only twenty five songs in English literal translation. No original text or no sub-headings are given. He in 'Festival Songs of the Oraon—Karam—gave only fourteen *karam* songs and a short description of the autumn festival of the Oraons (Archer, W. G.-1944).

He in his 'The Santal Sohrae' gave us only eleven songs of the Santals. Sohrae is the harvest festival of the Santals which is held in January. Archer along with W. J. Culshaw published 'Santal Rebellion Songs' (Archer, W. G. and Culshaw, W. J.-1945) where they presented us three Santal rebellion songs in literary English version.

Archer also contributed 'Santal Marriage Songs' in 'Snow balls of Garhwal', edited by D. N. Majumdar. This article contains only sixteen songs in English literal translation. Original text of any script is absent. These songs are collected from Santal Parganas of Bihar.

A. Bhattacharyya studied folklore of Korwas of Palamau district of Bihar, besides the study of their religious and economic life.

Anthropologically oriented scholar B. M. Bhaduri tried to assess 'The Hindu influence of Munda songs'. He observed that the Mundas of Tamar and Bundu P. S. of Ranchi district have been influenced highly by the Hindu ideas, language,

customs and manners. For that he ventured to trace the history of sixteenth century Ranchi when Sri Chaitanya went to Puri (Orissa) through this area. From this time Vaishnavism entered into the Munda country. Their songs, imaginations, metaphors, similies, songs of separation, love of nature, all are bedecked in the Vaishnav sentiments. He gave three Vaishnav love-songs from Munda in Mundari language as well as their English translations. The original text is given in Roman script.

Gautam Sankar Roy in his "A few songs of the Adibasis of Kolhan" (Roy, G. S -1949) presents fifteen songs of Hos of Singhbhum. Kolhan is the southern part of the Singhbhum district of Bihar. The adivasis of Kolhan called themselves Ho. No sub-headings of these songs are given. The songs are printed in English and in literal way. No original text in any script are found. Lastly, he gave a short glossary.

I came : noble publication, collected and edited by Rameebal Singh 'Rakesh.'. 'Rakesh' in his 'Maithili Lok Git' exclusively deals with different types of folksongs of Mithila. In the Preface, Pandit Amarnath Jha said that 'Rakeshji visited from door to door for seven years in different villages of Bihar to collect the folklore materials. In the Introduction, the author (Rakesh, R. S. Vikramabada) said, 'The revival of folksongs of Mithila depends upon the different types of festivals and dance. In Mithila, in every step we hear the folksongs'.

He gave the specimens of thirty one Sohar songs

with their word by word meaning in Hindi. In the *Janho ke git* he gave the specimen of ten songs, four songs in *Samari*, sixteen songs in *Lagna git*, twentytwo songs in *Nachari*, thirteen songs in *Samadauni*, twentythree songs in *Jhumur*, twenty-eight songs in *Tirhuti*, twenty-six songs in *Betgamani*, sixteen songs in *Fag*, twelve songs in *Chaitawar*, seventeen songs in *Malar*, nine songs in *Madhusrabani*, twelve songs in *Chhat ke git*, thirteen songs in *Shyama Chakeola*, five songs in *Jat gatin* and twelve songs in *Barahmasa*. All these songs are given in original text in Devnagri script along with their lucid translations in Hindi. In a word it is a valuable contribution in Hindi folk literature.

Jayakanta Misra, in the series of University of Allahabad Studies, 1951, published 'Introduction to the Folk Literature of Mithila Part I and Part II. Here he gives a brief survey of folk literature of Mithila. The first part contains introductory note on the songs, ballads, the nursery rhymes, riddles etc. and part two contains such literature that are connected with the beliefs, customs, tales, rituals, and legends.

Bhairam Munda in an original text in Devnagri script quoted one Munda song of Jadur (Munda, B. —1954) which is interesting.

Bhagvat Murmu presents nine different types of folksongs of Santals in original and in Devnagari script with their meaning in Hindi (Murmu, B., 1954).

L.N.Sahu in his 'Munda Songs' presents us nine folksongs of the Mundas taken from writer's book—'The Springs of the Soul'. Only the literal English

translation of the songs are given. (Sahu, L.N.—1953). As a teacher of a Ranchi school, he spent considerable part of his holidays in the field and collected songs. As a matter of fact, for the revival of folk literature of Chotanagpur, it is a splendid work.

Kameshwar Prasad Bahugun in his article 'Bharatiya Sanskriti Me Santhalo Ki Dan' deals with a very interesting problem (Bahugun, K.P.—1906). He at first tries to give a description about the cultural borrowings and diffusion and acceptance from the Santals by the Hindus. He then gave the specimens of nine folksongs relating to Santal philosophy, history and agony of the father for his son's marriage. All these songs are found in original text with Devnagri script.

L.P. Vidyarthi in his "An Anthropologist looks at Folklore", (published in *Folklore*, vol. 1 no. 5) describes the development of folklore study in India and gives definition and scope of folklore studies (Vidyarthi. L.P. - 1960).

Along with his different works on folklore and of the Birhor tribe, he has endeavoured to train a team of his students who are engaged in the researches on tribal and folklore of Bihar.

In 1962, another milestone laid by Dr. Tejnarayan Lal in the field of Maithili folk literature by publishing his monumental book 'Maithili Lok Gito Ka Adhyayan' (Lal, T.N.—1962). This book is a doctoral dissertation approved by the Nagpur University.

Lal in his introductory note said that the social problems were inherent in folksongs and for this

reason the folksongs reflect the psychological ideas of the common folk. He said that folksong is an art and is the controller of soul and heart. The book has eight chapters.

P.P.Mahato in his anthropological field report 'Around the Koel and Kanhar,' a folklore study of the Korwas of village Nawadih and Tehri of Palamau' deals with three forms of folklore,—folksongs, folktales and riddles. (Mahato, P.P.—1966). The design of his field study was prepared taking the help of Sankar Sen Gupta—that he has suggested in his book—'A Guide to Field Study', Calcutta, 1966.

F.T.Cole while dealing with 'Santali Riddles' said that the Santals as a race are very fond of telling tales and asking riddles. The young men of the villages after coming home from their work are in the habit of meeting together at a central place. According to him, some of their riddles are extremely interesting and show a great amount of originality. These riddles are more or less known by every Santal. He illustrates that with original texts in Roman script and their lucid translations (Cole, F.T.—1875) in English.

Girindra Nath Sarkar in his article—'Ho Riddles' said that the asking of riddles is in vogue among the Hos (Sarkar, G.N.—1916). He finds that riddle-asking is one of their important sources of amusement. In the Ho hamlet, it is usual to find in the evening, Ho lads sitting in a group, propounding and solving riddles. Ordinarily one of the lads of the group propounds a riddle while others try to

find its answer. He has given the illustrations of twentytwo riddles.

Sukumar Haldar in his 'Ho Riddles' said that the Ho's name for riddle is Kudmi or Chapked. The author (Haldar, S.—1917) presents us thirtyone specimens of Ho riddles.

S.C.Mitra in his article—'Notes on Ho Riddles' classified the riddles of Ho's in different sub-headings : (a) vertebrate and invertebrate animals, (b) trees and shrubs, (c) articles on food, (d) articles on implements of household use, (e) fishing tackle, and (f) parts of human body. Mitra is of the opinion that these riddles afford another instance of the primitive Ho's keen observation of nature (Mitra, S.C.—1920).

Mitra in his 'Bihari life in Bihari Riddles' published in the *Journal of Anthropological Society of Bombay*, vol. VII, No.1, deals for the first time a full-length article on riddle. The practice of propounding riddle for testing the sagacity of the wits of others is prevalent from the most ancient times. It was not only in vogue among the ordinary people as a mode or form of pastime, but also it has recourse to by persons of exalted rank, such as, monarchs and kings, for testing the wisdom or intelligence of the rivals in similar station of life. Riddles, if studied from a scholarly point of view, can throw a good deal of light on the manners and customs of the people among whom they are current.

In the second part of this article, he has dealt with agricultural and horticultural pursuits of the Biharis, their foods, etc. specially with the maize, the poppy, sugarcane, mustard plant, cotton plant,

the red peppar, jack fruits and many other things. He gave thirtysix different types of riddles in original text in Devanagri script with their translations in English.

The Swedish missionary P. O. Bodding has been a great name in the context for his contributions on Santal riddles. In addition to his contributions on Santal folktales, in a series of volume, he has collected and published two hundred forty-two riddles in Santali with their English translations. His intention was to provide some materials to show how the mind of a Santal works and what it is occupied with.

A. Grignard in his 'Hahn's Oraon Folklore in the Original', (Grignard. A.—1931) gave only thirty two different types of riddles with original text in Roman script and their English translation.

W. G. Archer in his 'The Blue Grove' presents two hundred and thirty riddles along with folksongs. These riddles are collected in Jashpur in the year 1938 and also from the Sadar sub-division of Ranchi. In most of the cases the language of conversation is the Oraon.

P. C. Ray Chaudhury, Editor, State Gazetteer of Bihar has collected and published a few folk tales and others folklore of Bihar in the journals like *Man-in-India*, *Folklore* and others.

In all the three cultural-linguistic region—Magahi, Maithili and Bhojpuri—the works on the collection of riddles is poor. Though the riddles reflect the theme of life and the nature of humour it has not yet attracted the attention of the scholars and workers of folklore.



# Folk-Dialects of Bihar and their Chief Characteristics

*By*

**Kameshwar Prasad Sharma**

There is a curious thing about the way in which treatises on the philological studies of Indian languages handle the subject of nomenclature of the dialects spoken in the State of Bihar. The term "Bihārī" language meaning "the language of Bihar" was first of all invented by Grierson. In fact, any language named Bihārī has never been in vogue in Bihar ; nor anyone before Grierson had ever named the language of this unit as such. This was completely a new name "proposed" by him on the analogy of Sindhī, Puhjībī etc, and on the grounds that it "has a prescriptive right to the dignity of assuming a general character" and that "there is a historical propriety in the name, as the word Bihar is derived from the Buddhist *Vihāras* or monasteries once so thickly spread over that region ; and Bihārī in its most ancient form was the language of the early Jains and Buddhists."<sup>1</sup> Actually, it happened in the year 1883, when the first part of the "Seven Grammars of the dialects and sub-dialects of the Bihārī Language" (SGBL) was published. At that time from the administrative point of view

Bihar was a part of the Presidency of Bengal, though linguistically it comprised a very large portion of the eastern part of the then North-West provinces, i. e., Uttar Pradesh of to-day.

In a letter written to the Director of Public Instruction, Bengal, dated Bankipore, the 24th January 1882, Grierson admits—"Many Bihar officials have complained to me of the impossibility of understanding the *gaoñwri bolī* of the witnesses who come into their courts and more than one has suggested to me that I should compile a grammar of it, imagining apparently that the *gaoñwri bolī* was one uniform language current over the whole of Bihar. This, of course, was not the case; vernacular of Bihar really consisting of three well-defined dialects, each of which itself varies according to locality...these dialects differed little in vocabulary; their main point of difference is grammar."<sup>2</sup> It is quite apparent from the above statement that in the mind of 'officials' Bihar was thought to be the distinct administrative unit quite different from Bengal and that distinction was mainly based on different '*bolī*', which was anything but '*Biharī*'.

Now the question arises what was this *gaoñwri bolī* prevalent in Bihar? An old popular song runs—'*Kas kas kasāmar kinā Magāhiyā, kā Bhojapuriyā kī Tirhutiyā.*' These are the three 'well-defined dialects' which have been constituting 'the vernacular of Bihar'. One should not forget the basic philological fact among the dialects spoken in Bihar that the long forms are formed by adding a suffix, such as *yā*

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2. Grierson—SGBL, Part I. Introduction.

or *wā* to the weak form of any noun. Generally speaking, here the people usually say *Sipāhiyā*, *Bātohiyā*, *Firangiyā*, *Lohawā*, *Gharawā* etc. instead of *Sipāhi*, *Batohi*, *Firangi*, *Lohā* and *Ghar* etc. These popular names are left due to their vileness and in conformity with the western Indian Languages like Punjabi, Sindhi etc. Even Grierson had to mention "*Maithilī* or *Tirhutiya*",<sup>3</sup> and the oldest reference to Bhojpuri as a language is reported to be *Bhojpuriyā* and *Purhiyā*.<sup>4</sup> Thus it is proved beyond doubt that there is no any language like 'Bihārī'<sup>5</sup> in Bihar, and the chief dialects spoken in this State are *Tirhutiya*, *Bhojpuriyā* and *Magāhiyā*.

Barring some of the Austric Languages spoken by a very small number of people in some hilly regions, the present State of Bihar has three well defined Aryan dialectal divisions namely *Tirhutiya*, *Bhojpuriyā* and *Magāhiyā*; and a number of not so-well-defined sub-dialectal sub-divisions, formed either by the intermingling of the main three dialects, or infected and imbued by the more developed neighbouring languages and dialects such as *Bengalī*, *Oriyā* and *Awadhī*, or made distinct by some different ethnic and religious peculiarities.

*Tirhutiya*, the only dialect "which has received any literary culture"<sup>6</sup> is spoken "in its greatest

3. Grierson—Linguistic Survey of India Vol. V, Part II, Pages 13 and 54.

4. Tiwari, Uday Narayan—Bhojpuri Bhāshā Aur Sāhitya, Proveshika, Pages 6-7.

5. Biswānāth Prasād—Krishi kosh, Part I, pages 18-19.

6. Grierson—L. S. I., Vol V, Part II, page 1.

purity by the Brahmans of the north of Darbhanga and Bhagalpur (including Saharsa) districts and by those of western Purnea.”<sup>7</sup> Grierson has called it *Standard Maithilī*. In the southern portion of the district of Darbhanga, it is spoken with more signs of the wearing away of inflexions and spreads to the southern portions of the district of Saharsa (i. e., up to Kisanganj Thana of the Madhepura Sub-division) and to the northern portions of Monghyr and Bhagalpur Districts (i. e., up to Begusarai and Khagaria Sub-divisions of Monghyr and the Birpur Thana of the Sadar Sub-division of Bhagalpur)—all on the northern bank of the Ganges. This is called the *Southern Standard Maithilī*, and it has a dialectal unit of its own. In the eastern portion of the district of Purnea and again in the southern portion of the district of Bhagalpur, it becomes more and more infected with Bengali phonetics. Though Grierson<sup>8</sup> and Subhadra Jha<sup>9</sup> have named it separately as *Eastern Maithilī* and *Chhikā-Chhikā Bolī*, but they, in fact, form a single dialectal unit on the both sides of the Ganges, right from Islampur Thana in north-east Purnea to Madhepura Thana in Santhal Parganas. The only difference between the two is this, that while one totally merges into Maithilī, the other merges into

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7. *ibid*, page 13.

8. *ibid*, page 13.

9. Subhadra Jha—The Formation of the Maithilī Language, page 6.

Magahī on their western sides.\* The so-called Maithilī spoken in the Muzaffarpur district is strongly infected by the neighbouring Bhojapuri spoken in various forms in the adjacent districts of Saran and Champaran. Grierson and Jha have called it *Western Maithilī*, but local enthusiasts now call it *Bajjikā*<sup>10</sup> naming it after the Apbhransa name *Vajji* of the oldest republic of the world Vriji Sangh, firmly established in this very district even before the birth of Gautam Buddha.

The Musalmans of Tirhut speak a corrupt form of Tirhutiya, admitting frequently some Persian and Arabic words. The high-class Musalmans generally speak in a dialect closely allied to the language of Oudh. It is locally known as *Shekhaī*, or *Musalmāni* or *Jolahi Boli*.

Thus we find that the Maithilī or Tirhutiya dialect has altogether six sub-dialectal forms in Bihar, including the Standard one exclusively spoken by the Brahmans. It has got a script of its own, closely akin to Bengali and used by Maithil Brahmans only. "It is not used by the persons of other castes."<sup>11</sup>

*Bhojpurīyā* is the language of west Bihar covering a vast tract of land on the both sides of the Ganga from Champaran in the north to Palamau in the south. It has four sub-dialectal subdivisions in Bihar. They are ; *Standard Nagpurīyā*,

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\* The spoken language of Bhagalpur division is being named as 'Angika' and its speakers are aspiring for its separate existence.—Ed

10. Siyaram Tiwari.—*Bajjikā Bhāṣā* our *Sāhitya*, page 1.

11. Grierson—L. S. I, Vol. V. Part II, page 21.

*Madhesiyā* and *Tharū*. Standard Bhojpuri, as Grierson and Tiwari call it, is spoken in the districts of Shahabad and Saran and extends over a large area of southern and eastern Uttar Pradesh in various forms. Tiwari calls it Southern Standard because there is a little variation between the Bhojpuri spoken in these districts of Bihar and their adjoining districts in Uttar Pradesh. *Nagpuri* is spoken among the settled Aryans in the east of the Palamau and nearly over the whole of Ranchi district. This sub dialect has undergone certain modifications by the influence of Magahi which surrounds it from three sides and by the Chhattisgarhi from the west. It is also called Sadan or Sadri, meaning the language of the settled one; and Dikka kaj, meaning the language of the Aryans. *Madhesiyā* is the language of the 'Madhya-deśa' between Tirhutiyā and Gorakhpuriyā of Gorakhpur: covering the district of Champaran. It is a border form of speech possessing some of the characteristics of each dialect, but its main structure is that of Bhojpuriyā. *Tharū* is a corrupt form of Bhojpuriyā spoken by a Tibeto-Burman race all along the base of the Himalayas from Bahraich in Uttar Pradesh to Champaran in Bihar.

*Magahi* is spoken in the whole of the districts of Patna, Gaya and Hazaribagh; and in a portion of the districts of Palamau, Monghyr and Bhagalpur. Grierson says "over, the whole of this area, it is practically one and the same dialect; with hardly any local variations. Only near the city of Patna it

is infected with idioms belonging to the north-western provinces by the strong Musalminī element which inhabits that town, and which itself speaks more or less correct Urdu".<sup>12</sup> But Dr. Bishwanath Prasad denying this statement, asserted authoritatively<sup>13</sup> that it was wrong on the part of Grierson to say that Magāhī had not any local variation. In fact, only in the one district, viz. Patna, we find at least five variations and what to speak of other districts. "Magāhiy, is spoken in the districts of Patna, Gaya, Monghyr and Bhagalpur varies considerably from one place to another."<sup>14</sup>

### Some common characteristics of Bihari Dialects (B.D.)

1. As regards pronunciation BD occupies a middle place in between Awadhī and Bengali—Bhojpuriyā is more akin to the first than the latter, and Tirhutiyā is more akin to the latter than the first. The vowel 'a' has a broad sound—broader than Awadhī and not so broad as in Bengali. It is something in between the 'u' in 'cub' and the 'o' in 'cob'.

2. Generally speaking BD's अ is a short vowel and it becomes long only when there is accent upon it. In respect of all long sounds, there are different grades of them, and one sound though long, may not be as long as another long sound may be. In pronouncing this generally accepted long vowel,

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12. Grierson—L. S. I. Vol. V, Part II, page 31.

13. Bishnwnath Prasad - Magahī Sanskār Geet, Page 18.

14. *ibid*, page 19.

Bihāris twist it in such a way that phonetically it becomes short with a curve towards the long one. Thus in pronouncing "*Pānī*" Bihāris make 'a' some thing like "aī" and "nī" something like "ñ" throwing their lips with a stretch towards right.

3. BD have a tendency to dentalise lingual semi-vowels, they use 'r' and 'rh' in place of 'ṛ' and 'ṛh'. Again they often have 'r' or 'n' where Hindi has 'ṛ'. '*paṛana*' becomes '*Parab*'; '*phal*' becomes '*phar*' and '*ulatā*' becomes '*unta*'.

4. BD have the short vowels *ē*, *aī*, *o*, *a*, coming more nearer to Bengali.

5. While Hindi always contracts to *ai* and *au*, BD prefer to retain the hiatus *aī* and *au*. Sometimes the hiatus gives birth to the sound of diphthong changing to 'ay' and 'aw'—such as, *kaun*, *kaun*, *kawan* and *pailā*, *paīlā*, *paylā*.

6. The sound of palatal 's' is non-existent in BD.

7. As regards derivation, it is observed that the strong form of masculine nouns of the 'a' base has in BD a final 'a' and the short form of pronouns a final 'e'.

8. BD prefer the weak form ending in a silent consonant of masculine nouns with an 'a' base, as against Hindi preferring the strong forms in 'au' or 'o' base. Thus Hindi '*Barau*' become '*Bar*' in BD, coming nearer to Bengali '*Boṛō*'.

9. The singular possessive or genitive case of the personal has in BD; a medial 'o' as against Hindi 'e' or 'a'.

10. Inflection is the most important point to



be noticed. In respect of declension BD do not possess the active case in 'ne' which we meet in Hindi. Bihāris suffer a lot due to this *tyranny of 'ne.'* Though they come under the so called Hindi-speaking area, yet they are occasionally humiliated for committing mistakes particularly in this respect. Again, the oblique form singular of strong masculine nouns in 'ā' has in BD a final 'ā', as against a final 'e' in Hindi. Thus in Hindi it is 'ghoreka', in BD 'ghorākī'. In fact, in BD the postpositions denoting case differ considerably from those in Hindi. In Hindi, the genitive postpositions are 'ka', 'ke', and 'ki', and their use depends upon two factors ; i.e. whether the governing noun is in the direct or oblique form, and whether it is masculine or feminine. In BD there are generally two sets of genitival postpositions ; i.e. one which never changes, and a set which changes according as the governing noun is in the direct or oblique case, but not changing for gender. Thus 'uskā ghorā, uske ghorē par, uskī ghorī' change into 'okar' ghorā, okar ghorā par, okar ghorī' and 'ōk'rā ghorā, ōk'rē ghorī, ōk'ra ghorā par' in BD, as the case may be. In *chhikā-chhiki*, the most eastern dialect of the so called Hindi-speaking area, this genitival postposition comes nearer to Bengali. Thus in Hindi 'ghar kā bāñs', in Tirhutia 'gharak bāñs', in chika-chhiki 'gharōrō bañs', and in Bengali 'gharer bāñs'. In Magahiya, there are genitive postpositions which change according to the gender of the governing noun, but then they are not affected by its being direct or oblique.<sup>15</sup>

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15. See Aryani ; Magāhi Bhasha ka Vyākaran, for details.

11. The conjugation especially of verbs in BD is radically different from that in Hindi, while it closely approximates to that in Bengali. The periphrastic present is formed by adding the verb substantive to the inflected verbal noun in BD, while in Hindi, it is formed by adding the verb substantive to the present participle. Again, the past tense in BD, like Bengali, is formed by means of the suffix 'al', as against in Hindi, by means of the suffix 'ā' or 'yau'. Thus Hindi 'rahā', BD 'rahāl' Bengali 'rōhilō'. In the periphrastic tenses of transitive verbs in BD, the perfect participle is used in its oblique, and not in its direct form. Thus Hindi 'maiñne dekhā hai', BD 'ham dek'h'le bātī'. In BD like Bengali, the future tense is made by the affix 'ab', but Hindi forms its future in a quite different way. Thus BD 'karab', Bengali 'kariho', and Hindi 'karūngā'. BD have five distinct tenses which are formed directly from the root or participles, and which are not periphrastic. Hindi has only one such tense—the present conjunctive ; for the present imperative is only a variety of that tense, and the future indicative is formed from it also by the simple addition of the syllable 'gā, gī, ge'. Again as against Hindi, which has atleast two forms of the verbal noun, one in 'n', and other in 'ī' with its oblique form in 'ā' : such as 'chal'nā', 'chalī,' 'chalā', BD have one in 'ab' and other in 'al', and one in the form of the root having its oblique form in 'ē', such as 'chalab', 'chalaal', 'chalē'. In BD the causal verb is formed by adding 'aw' to the simple verb, while in Hindi, it is

formed by adding 'ā', such as BD *karāwal*, Hindi *'karānā'*.

### Some points of difference between the Bihari Dialects (BD)

There is a marked ethnic difference between the speakers of Tirhutiyā and Magahiyā on the one hand and those who speak Bhojpuriyā on the other. Tirhut is one of the most congested parts of India, and has a definite Brahmanical domination. For centuries it has been a tract too proud to admit other nationalities to intercourse on equal terms. A great part of Magadha, the land where Magahiyā is spoken is wild, barren and sparsely cultivated. Its peasantry, oppressed for centuries is poor and uneducated. Its inhabitants and dialects, both are called uncouth or boorish. On the other hand Bhojpur has an alert and active nationality, very daring, dearly loving a fight, and ready to carve some fortune out of any opportunity.

The most characteristic and striking difference between these three dialects is in the declension of nouns. Bhojpuriyā has an oblique form of the genitive case, which is wanting in the substantives of the other two. In pronouns, the honorific pronoun of the second person is *apən* in Tirhutiyā and Magahiyā, but *raūre* in Bhojpuriyā. The verb substantive in Tirhutiyā is *'chhai'* or *'achhi'* in Magahiyā it is *hai* and in Bhojpuriyā it is *'bate'* *'bare'* or *'hawe'*. The three dialects all agree in forming the present tense definite by adding the verb substantive to the present participle. Thus Tirhutiyā

'*dekhai-achhi*', Magāhiyā '*dekkait-hai*', and Bhojpuriā '*dekhāt-bāṭē*'. Magāhiyā has also a special form of the present '*dekha-hai*', so has Bhojpuriyā—'*dekhe-lā*'. Fact is, the whole system of verbal conjugation is amazingly complex in Tirhutiyā and Magāhiyā, but is simple and straightforward in Bhojpuriyā. In Tirhutiyā and Magāhiyā verbs do not change for number, but each person has several forms. There are four principal forms depending each upon the honour of the subject and of the object, direct or remote. Grierson has very remarkably explained this complex nature of Tirhutiyā verbs<sup>6</sup>. In Bhojpuriyā, except in a few isolated instances, the form of the verb depends only on the subject. The object has no effect upon it. Magāhiyā follows the Tirhutiyā in forming these complexities.

As told before, Tirhutiyā has altogether six sub-dialectal forms in Bihar including the Standard one, which is already exemplified in short. The Samastipur Subdivision of Darbhanga, North Monghyr and the Madhupura Sub-division of the new district of Saharsa, which was earlier a part of North Bhagalpur, form an independent dialectal belt of land on the northern bank of the Ganga. The Tirhutiyā spoken in this belt differs from the Standard in termination of the genitive. Here a final long vowel is shortened before the genitive termination 'k'. '*Nināk*' of Standard Tirhutiyā becomes '*ninak*'. The locative in 'e' is much more common in this southern form of the dialect. The

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16. Grierson—L. S. I., Vol. V, Part 11, Page 25.

difference becomes more distinct in the use of pronouns: the genitives of the personal pronouns are—*'mōr'*, *'mōre'* or *'mōra'*, *'hamar'*, *'hamare'* or *'hamara'*, *'tōr'*, *'tōre'*, *'tōra'*, *'tōhar'*, *'tōhare'*, *'tōhara'*. The honorific pronoun of the second person is *'ais'* *'āha'* or *'apane'*. The genitives of *jē*, *sē* and *kē* are *jekrā*, *tekarā* and *tekrā*. The oblique form of *is* is *kathā*, *kethā* and *kiyā*. In respect of verbs also a number of changes occur, which are not being given here for want of space.

The language of the greater part of the Purnea District, named as Eastern Maithili by Grierson and Subhadra Jha, is locally known as *Gāṇḍwari*. Here the termination of the genitive is *'ke'*, *'kar'* or *'kār'*. One from of the nominative pronoun of the first person is *'hamme'*, and of the second person *'tohē'*. The genitives of *'jē'*, *'sē'* and *'kē'* are *'jē-kar'*, *'tē-kar'* and *'kē-kar'*. The oblique form of *'kē'* is *'kathē'* or *kithē*. The plural of all pronouns is formed by adding *'sē'* or *'ār'*, as against the Standard *'sab'*. Besides the base *'chha'*, a strengthened base *'chhika'* is found. The past tense of the verb *'hoi'* is *'hāl'* and not *'bhāl'* as in the standard.

The language of South Bhagalpur, named as *chhika-chikā* by Grierson and Jha, is locally known as *'Bhagalpuriyā'*, and by modern language-conscious educated enthusiasts as *'angikā'*. It is partly influenced by the Bengali from the east and Magahiya from the west and south, and closely resembles the dialect spoken north of the Gangā in Madhipura and Purnea. It adds the sound of *'ō'* to the end of words. Thus *'apan'* becomes *'apnō'*, *'hamar—hamrō'*, *tor—torō'*

'jekor—jekrō', 'kekar-kekārō', and so on. The other peculiarity is the tendency to lengthen a final short of the standard. Thus 'kar' becomes 'karī'. As reported earlier, the genitival postposition in this dialect comes nearer to Bengali's 'er'.

The language spoken in the district of Muzaffarpur is peculiar and it seems that it is in a transition stage. The district is divided into two equal parts by the river 'Burhi-Gaṇḍak' flowing west to east. The language of the northern part of the river is influenced by the Tirhutiyā of north Darbhanga and of the southern by the Mādhesiyā, a dialect of Bhojpuriyā of Champaran. The southern portion of the district on the bank of Gangā is infected with Magahiyā of Patna district situated just opposite on the southern bank. Thus, in a belt formed by the west-north portion of the Hajipur sub-division, east-west portion of the Sadar sub-division of Muzaffarpur, west-north portion of the Sitamarhi sub-division and east-north portion of the district of Champaran, all the three principal dialects spoken in Bihar intermingle into each other and present a queer problem for the students of philology. According to local educated enthusiasts the standard *Bajjikā* is spoken in this very belt. Here 'achhi' becomes 'hā', 'chhainhi hāin', *th<sub>h</sub>k-hāin* and 'rahainhi—rahain.' On the other hand the difference between Bhojpuriyā and the dialect of this area is, 'Rahe' becomes 'Rahai' 'kahalas' becomes 'kahalak', and 'gail' becomes 'gel'.

Bhojpuriyā has three sub-dialects of its own in Bihar—Nagpuriyā, Madhesiyā and Tharū. Nagpuriyā is bound on the north-west by the standard

form of Bhojpuriā of north Palamau, on the north east by the Magāhiya of Hazaribagh, and on the east and south by the mixed dialect of Oriya, Bengali and Kurmalī. In this dialect the influence of neighbouring Bengali leads the letter 'a', to be sometimes pronounced as 'ū' or 'o'. Thus 'sab' becomes 'sōb' or 'sob'. Nouns do not change in the singular. The plural is formed by adding 'man', borrowed from Chhartisgarhī. The genitive post-position are 'k', 'kir' or 'kar' and instrumental 'e'.

Madhesiyā is spoken in the district of Champaran. The Tirhutī influence is stronger in the east of the district in the Dhākā Thana. As we go west, the influence decreases, till on the banks of the Gandak, the dialect is the same as that spoken in north-east Saran and in east Gorakhpur. The dialect shares with Tirhutiyā a dislike to the cerebral 'r', frequently substituting the dental 'r' for it. The Tirhutiyā form of 'Okani' is used as in Muzaffarpur. For the auxiliary verb, we have in this dialect both 'barā' and 'batē'. The third person singular of the past tense of transitive verbs regularly end in 'ak', decidedly a Tirhutiyā symptom.

Even from this short sketch of the dialects spoken in the State of Bihar, it seems that it was this very State where the old Magadhī was disintegrated into so many pieces and scattered throughout.

# Bihari Culture as Reflected in Folksongs

*By*

S. D. Mishra

The widespread folksongs of India represent the most intimate expressions of the subsoil, based on its religion, belief, and tradition. Very much similar to other parts of the country, the enchantment, the vivacity and frowns of fortune, the laughter, the heartache and such many varied expressions of life have been very truly projected through the Maithili, Magahi and Bhojpuri folksongs ; or in other words, we can affirm that the essence of folk-life of Bihar in its most authentic colours can be gazed through its soul-stirring folksongs.

Folk-life and folksongs are kith and kin. In fact, folksongs are nature's melodies sprouting through the medium of folk-life. These songs have not been introduced by any particular group of people, but the gusto and the pangs of life have made manifest in the folk-literature which is oral and traditional in reality. Right from the birth of a child till his last breadth; which is that expression of life, that has not made manifest through the span of folksongs. In reality, folksongs are like the horoscopes of human life and this simile as such holds good very truly for the people of Bihar. Their past and present life has made manifest in their folksongs. In addition, these songs inspire them to gaze into their future.



Hindu society is tied-up by its age-old rituals. These rituals go akin with religion. It is on account of this that the folk-heart with all its sincerity and belief religiously follows those ideals. When a son is born, "Sohar", the most popular tune of the occasion, is sung in the whole of Bihar. This occasion is fully celebrated. Joy prevails everywhere. The houses start echoing with these songs.

The "Sohar" has been given the importance of being predominantly cultural. Where at one end it is used for a happy celebration on the other, for educational purposes. In one of the "Sohar-lyrics" an attempt has been made to portray the nature of a woman being miser and vulgar by speech. She is groaning with labour pain, but due to her fickle nature no woman is willing to come to her help. In the end, her husband says, "due to your fickle mind, and quarrelsome character no one is willing to come to your help, what a pity!"<sup>1</sup>

On the birth of a daughter nobody sings "Sohar". Everyone in the house gets downhearted, and gloomy. A sort of gloom prevails all over. Just for solace it is said that Laxmi (The Goddess of Wealth) had dropped in. As soon as a daughter is born in a high caste, the problem of her marriage starts worrying the parent. They start thinking wherefrom the amount of dowry will come. This becomes a permanent mental suffering for the parent right from the birth of a daughter. It is on account of this that in the folk-songs of Bihar one can find a smell

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1. Bhojpur lokageeton ke Vibidh Roop, by Dr. S. D. Mishra, Page 4.

of ostracism for a female child. But for the son, as he grows, there grows happiness in the house. His sacred thread ceremony is celebrated with full heart. A day comes, when on the occasion of his marriage ceremony, elephants and horses are given a special embellishment just to symbolise prosperity. The music fills the atmosphere with happiness and the father feeling proud of his son leads the grandeur of the marriage procession.<sup>2</sup>

At the time of the marriage ceremony of a poor girl her father is always alarmed and worried when his "Samdhi" (the bridegroom's father) be displeased or depressed for anything. The poor father does not leave even the darkest corner of his house unclean. He personally affirms that all the possible approaches to his house are thoroughly cleaned, for he knows it certain, to-day, it is going to arrive the marriage party of his daughter<sup>3</sup>. The marriage is solemnised. The girl who was beloved of her brother, who was like the eyes to her father, who was like life to her mother, is getting someone else's property. Leaving back every one at her mother's place, she is going thus bitterly crying breaking their hearts. She leaves everybody for ever. The most intimate image of this can be seen in Bhojpuri folk-songs where the father after seeing off his daughter weeps standing at his door—the mother cries sitting in the courtyard of the house—the sister-in-law cries sitting by the kitchen<sup>4</sup>. The mothers

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2. *ibid.* Page 35

3. Bhojpuri Lokageeton ke Vividh Roop—Dr. S. D. Mishra, page 35

4. Bhojpuri Lokageeton ke Vividh Roop—Dr. S. D. Mishra, page 23

of the Maithili<sup>5</sup> and Magahi<sup>6</sup> areas, during luncheon hour, remember their daughters and feel sorry often for the separation—tears roll down their eyes—their hearts start aching.

But the newly wedded couple get along with the new ways of life which all in all amorous and precious for them. In the game of love-making they get lost in the lap of luxury—when at one time they fly into a rage, the very next moment, they try to clear their misunderstanding—and this is how, slowly and slowly, they go on knowing the fervour of each other<sup>7</sup>. The day comes when the husband starts preparing to go on his working place and it is then the heart of his wife starts crying. She always thinks how shall I live alone—how shall I console my heart ! In the end she says, “if you do not change your mind, please do me a favour by getting your image drawn on my hand, so that in the moment of my loneliness, I may soothe my emotions just by gazing at the image”<sup>8</sup>. And this is how with a mixture of beautitudes and solitudes, the life of the folk people of Bihar goes on.

People, while making efforts to make their present life happy, also desire simultaneously to

5. Maithilec Lokageet—Ram Iqbal Singh ‘Rakesh’, page 180

6. Hindi Sahityaka Vrihad Itihas, Vol. XVI, Ed. Rahul Sankrityayan & Dr. K. D. Upadhyaya, page 69.

7. Bhojpuri Lokageetan ke Vividh Roop, Dr. S. D. Mishra, page 81.

8. Bhojpuri Lokageeton ke Vividh Roop—Dr. S. D. Mishra, page 44.

go on strengthening their life and to start a fresh after rebirth. They go on fasten sometime on Sundays and sometime on *Ekadwashi*. The Hindus of Bihar believe in too many folk-gods. One of the influential folk-gods is "Ghoor Baba" ( a mound created by throwing dirt ). He is worshipped on an appointed day. All these events of life have been very well portrayed in the folk-songs and other folk materials of Maithili, Magahi, and Bhojpuri areas. Fasting on the sixth day of Kartik (*Chhathi Vrat*)<sup>9</sup> is almost like a national celebration for Bihar, which is, in fact, 'Surya Vrat', a fast for the Sun. In Magahi<sup>10</sup> and Bhojpuri<sup>11</sup> areas, it is only the womenfolk which observe this fast for the welfare of their sons, but in Maithili area husband\* and wife together may observe the fast.

When the enchanting month of Phalgun (Spring season) comes near, the beloved becomes impatient to see her lover, so that she can play with him the season's colour.

In the Spring a young girl's fancy rightly turns to thoughts of love. She suffers with the agony of not having her lover back home, when others, had already come.<sup>12</sup> Its pink and white are everywhere. A ray of sun—and all the slope laughs with its

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9. Maithili Lokageet—Ram Iqbal Singh "Rakesh", page 356.

10. Hindi Sahitya Vrihad Itihas, Vol. XVI, Ed. Rahul Sankrityayan and Dr. K. D. Upadhyaya, page 58.

11. Bhojpuri Lokageeton ke Vividh Roop—Dr. S. D. Mishra, page 117.

12. Bhojpuri Lokageeton ke Vividh Roop—Dr. S. D. Mishra, page 133.

white and red. It is the season of flower, of hope. The Spring is come.

The captivating season of "Chaitra" makes her all the more restless. Husband, the stone-hearted one is not even sending a letter. In the silence of the midnight the Coo or the Nightangle echoes and it makes impossible for the helpless woman to sleep.<sup>13</sup> One fine morning, without any prior intimation, the lord comes resounding the atmosphere with a romantic tune on his flute and fills into the sad life of the woman--the heaven of her dream.

The world was all forgot, the struggle is over. Desperate the joy, that day every moment was precious. The beloved feels too much, because had she known about his arrival earlier, she would have kept ready for him the choicest Basmati rice.<sup>14</sup>

In the Maithili, Maghi and Bhojpuri folk-songs of Bihar, it is not only the usual life of people which has been portrayed, but those incidents, persons, and the view-points have also been portrayed equally well, which have influenced rather provided dynamism to the folk-life, to the folk-views, keeping restored their genuine odour.

Some of the people are of the opinion that Indians are religious-minded and they are least concerned with the affairs of the rest of the world. But here it can be said with responsibility that those who think on this line is absolutely mistaken us.

13. Maithili Lokageet—Ram Iqbal Singh 'Rakesh', page 303.

14. Bhojpuri Lokageeton ke Vividh Roop—Dr. S. D. Mishra, page 108.

If they want to see the genuine nature of our people, they must try to gaze into these folk-songs with broad open eyes and minds as well.

In these folk-songs, the Moghulian malevolence and the hunger for sex have been very effectively described. How Kusuma Debi, enduring the atrocity of Mirza Saheb, kept her chastity intact,—this story can be a matter of proud and honour for any society. In the end, King Mirza wept bitterly keeping his mouth closed tight with a handkerchief. He told Kusuma Devi that she had exposed him as a sinner and that he could not show the devil of his face to any one. Kusuma's brother and father with their turbans flying high, laughed at the defeated King. The brother proudly says, "O my sister, you have saved the prestige both of your father's and husband's families"<sup>15</sup>,

The Britishers called the first freedom struggle of India of 1857 as Mutiny, but in fact, that was the struggle of the people of India to make free their country from slavery, the command of which in Bihar was in the able hands of Babu Kunwar Singh. The vigorous men of Bihar were already in the thick of the fray with Babu Kunwar Singh, but if any one of them showed the slightest hitch for any thing they were compelled by their brave wives to jump to the cannon's mouth and save the freedom of the country. The wives held forth their husbands and said, "The freedom struggle of our country is at its climax, you must go and fight. If you have lost all your vigour

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15. Bhojpuri Lokageeton ke Vividh Roop, Dr. S. D. Mishra, page 44.

and feel shy, please put on these bangles in your delicate hands and we will manage to keep up your integrity, your loyalty"<sup>16</sup>. This sort of a good mouth-filling oath coming from the womanhood of Bihar has been exemplary in the history of freedom struggle of India.

Ever since 1857, the people of India had been struggling hard to obtain freedom and in 1942 they challenged the Britishers and said, "Now it is not possible for you to stand before the dynamism of Gandhi's freedom movement. You have enjoyed enough in this country and now, you will be sold at auction"<sup>17</sup> And the same came true in the year 1947 when India became free on August 15.

Republic India, under the leadership of Nehru went ahead with the task of an overall development but for reasons best known to them the Chinese attacked India in 1962. The folk-people of Bihar raised their voice attuned against this and sung—O' Chou, O' Mao, you cannot stand at the defensive attack of Nehru. You have had much of luxuries of our friendship, but now your knavery will not do".<sup>18</sup>

The people of Bihar are very simple, non-artificial, and consensus to the responsibilities and honesty-of life. They know that the entire pomp and show of the world is short lived, no one is immortal,

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16. Bhojpuri Lokageeton ke Vividh Roop, Dr. S. D. Mishra, page 136.

17. Bhojpuri Lokageeton ke Vividh Roop—Dr. S. D. Mishra, page 148.

18. Bhojpuri Loka sahitya ke Sanskritik Adhyayan,—Dr. S. D. Mishra, page 204.

one day or the other this body has got to be end, to start a fresh, and to keep the cycle going.<sup>19</sup> Then why not make the the best use of little time in fulfilling to the best of one's abilities, the vital responsibilities of life ?

This is the true colour of the life of the people of Bihar, which has appeared in the folk-songs of Bihar like the appearance of the rainbow in the blue sky.

The modern age is an age of revolution. A new history of faiths and traditions is gaining ground but at the same time the old history of our faiths and traditions is well preserved in these folk-songs. And, therefore, it is necessary to-day, that these folk-songs are recorded, preserved and studied, for better utilization.

19. Bhojpuri Lokageeton ke Vividh Roop—Dr. S. D. Mishra, page 177.



# Folk-Arts of Bihar

By

**Dayashankar Upadhaya**

The history of arts and crafts of Bihar goes back to the hoary past. In Vedic and Upanishadic period this oldest part of India was known as Videha country comprising Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga districts of north Bihar and its capital was Mithila. This Videha was the centre of cultural re-generation. The name of Mithila is constantly referred to in the epics and Jatakas. In Gupta records Mithila collectively known as Tirabhuk (Tirhuta)<sup>1</sup>. In south Bihar, there are three tracts (south of the Ganga river) in centre it is known as Magadha (comprising Patna, Gaya and some parts of Monghyr districts) The name of Magadha first appears in the Atharvaveda. It was closely connected with the *vratyas* in mystic hymn of the Atharvaveda. Lastly, the capital of Magadha was Pataliputra in lieu of Rajgriha. This Magadha was the greatest centre of arts and crafts during early mediaeval period. The coast of Magadha was Anga, comprising Bhagalpur and some parts of Monghyr district. This Anga-desha is also referred to in the same passage

1. Arch. S. R.—1903-04. Pp 88

2. Arth. Veda—V. 22. 14.

3. *ibid*—XV

of Atharvaveda<sup>4</sup>. Its capital was Champa. The imperial glory of Anga is undoubtedly reflected in the songs of Aitareya Brahmana<sup>5</sup>. But in due course Anga became the integral part of growing empire of Magadha. To west was Karush (Shahabad and some parts of Palamau district). Finally hilly tracts of Chotanagpur was known from the epigraph of Gupta period as Atavika<sup>6</sup> ( अटविक ). It is the land of aboriginal tribes. Thus Tirhuta, Magadha, Anga, of Bihar and Atavika (Chotanagpur)—these four regions got their importance in different ages in the field of arts and crafts.

The folk-art of Bihar started from pre-Mauryan period. From the excavations and explorations we have come to know the colossal folk images of Yaksha and Yakshini made of stone. It is carved in the round but its main expression is frontal. Its dominating size is symbolical of the elemental power of the divinity as conceived in that early age. In course of time, these Yaksha and Yakshini folk-images become reconciled to the new divine images as attendant gods.

Later on, this tradition of folk-art was modified in the Mauryan period by court art of great vitality and technical competence. During Kushan and Gupta periods the folk-art in the form of terracotta was developed. In the Gupta period this art form reached its climax. But folk-pottery making was very ancient one.

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4. *ibid*—V. 22, 14.

5. *Ait. Brah.* VIII, 32

6. Pali Inscription—जस्यर्षाटवि सकर

### **Potteries and Terracottas**

In Bihar, the art of pottery making goes back to the chalcolithic period (one thousand B. C.) when people used to make beautiful potteries and painted black and red ware. It shows wide range of different shapes and sizes which included lipped bowl, dish on stand, perforated vessel etc. Later on, the potters developed a new type of pottery which is known as North-Black Polished ware; which has certain characteristics such as, well polished wares shining like a mirror and it shows different shades (golden, silvery, black, violet etc.). But in subsequent period the potters' art got confined to medium and coarse red wares. The folk-potteries in Kushana and Gupta periods were decorated with incised or stamped designs. The decorative motifs found on the potteries are numerous and attractive. But later on, the potters have not confined themselves to the pottery only. They were conversant with clay modelling art as well.

The terracotta art is the vernacular medium of figurine of sculpture in all early cultures of world's art. The terracotta figurine in India ranging over a period of three millennium B. C. belongs to the age both before and after the use of stone for the purpose of fashioning sculptural form. It is permissible to believe that burnt clay was the common medium for cult figurine before the use of stone became common. The history of terracotta art begins in Bihar from one thousand B. C. right from the excavation at Oriup (Bhagalpur district), and Chiran (Saran district) where terracotta

female figurine and a beautiful specimen of a bird in chalcolithic type are found. But this art received full attention in Mauryan period and reached its zenith in the Gupta period. Thousands of male and female figurines, animals and birds in various shapes and sizes made of baked clay have been unearthed from almost all the archaeological sites of Bihar. They reveal a continuous tradition of clay art down to the Mughal period. They are the excellent specimen of folk-art. The clay folk-art was intimately in touch with the life of people—rural and urban—and every aspect of life is depicted in folk-artists' workmanship. The process of terracotta making is very simple one. There are two types of processes i. e. handmade and by moulding which employed by the potter for making different types of terracottas in centuries before Christ (up to Sunga period). During Gupta period the beautiful moulds were prepared for casting terracotta figurine of gods and goddesses, human figurine, birds and animals etc. From those moulds several casts were taken in finely prepared clay. As these plaques were in the process of dyeing, the artists carefully cleaned them, brought out details by polishing (coloured) and chiseling. This was the only time when correction, if necessary, could be made on sun dried clay models.

The village potters generally made the clay toys for children and pots of daily use. These clay figurines are found of mainly two types—the religious one i. e. of Gods, of Goddesses (Siva, Pārvatī, Ganesh, Viṣṇu, Lakshmi, Durgā, Kālī, Saraswati etc) and

secondly, the recreational one i. e. the small toys of animal (elephant, horse, dog, cow, etc.) and birds. Now we can study through this folk-art, the social behaviour of the people of the age. The sociological study of these terracotta figurines reveal that the village potter has developed the refineness and decorative motifs in their workmanship.

At present in Bihar, each and every village, the potters prepare different terracotta for children. But the important centres are : Lalganj (Muzaffarpur district) Purnea, Purandarpur and Rajgriha (Patna district). Lalganj toys have fine colour composition and fine excavation. Purnea toys are generally painted with white colour and then different colours are applied to it. Purandarpur toys are of ordinary nature. Rajgriha toys are mostly painted by prominent colours—blue, black, red etc. Some specimens of these folk-toys are preserved in the folk-art and craft museum at Patna. The potters generally prepare folk-toys on the festive occasions and at the time of local fairs (*mela*).

The purpose of manufacture of these folk-toys etc. is just to create a world for children and reveals to it the real world into which the child has to enter. At the same time it should not be a plaything that merely attracts but dose not educate. Secondly, these terracottas are intended to give a definite form and shape. Hence, in society from the olden days, the terracottas reveal the social life and specially to educate the children and make them good citizen. Moreover, it is a popular medium of the expression of artistic urge.

### *Bhitti Chitra or Wall Painting*

The second important folk-art in Bihar is *Bhitti Chitra* of villages. In many Sanskrit, Buddhist and Jain works the paintings ( *आलेख्यम्* ) is referred to as one of the prominent arts of the 64 traditional arts and crafts of India. *Chitrosutram*<sup>1</sup> has referred to painting as best of all arts. The village women decorate wall of their houses with different *chitra-paintings* during the marriage ceremony or on other auspicious occasions. The wall-paintings is prevalent in almost all regions of Bihar with certain modifications. In Bhojpurī speaking area of this State the word Urahan ( *उरेहना* ) has been used for making wall painting. This wall-painting is generally drawn on outer or inner walls of the houses. During the marriage ceremony the inner walls of the *Kohabar* (the room for new bride and bridegroom) is very well decorated with different motifs in a beautiful manner. In Bhojpurī folk-lore we find description or paintings of *Kohabar* or paintings in the walls of the room of newly wedded couple. In one folk-song we have a description for drawing four birds and one pair of goose in such a wall painting of a *Kohabar*. In another song there is a reference of painting of the figure of sun and the moon.<sup>2</sup>

In this Bhojpurī speaking area the wall painting is done by folk women or by such men who are “Mili” by caste. But among the tribal people of Bihar i. e.

1 Chaitrasutram—38...( कलां प्रवरं चिमं घर्मकामाथ मोक्षदम् ) ॥

2. चारि चिरइया जोड़ी हंस रे ॥

3 कोहवर लिखवि-चान रे सुरुजवा ; मंडवा लिखवि गोपीचंद रे ॥

Munda, Oraon, Pahariā etc. it is done by the male and female both who are Nayou (नाऊ) by caste. In north Bihar specially in Mithila region this *Kohabar* painting is very famous one. Such paintings is generally made on the walls in three places : the *Gonsai-ghar* (room for *kula-devata*), the *Kohabar-ghar* (honeymoon room for newly wedded couple), and *Kohabar-gharak-koniyan* (corridor or outside of the *kohabar-ghar*). The different colours are mixed with goat's milk and applied with cotton wool or rug. The colours are prepared by indigenous method at home, for example, black by thick deposit of smoke, yellow by mixing juice of banana leaf and milk with lime, red from the juice of *kusum* flower, green from the leaves of creeper etc. But at present folk women are using chemical colours for the decorative motifs for wall-paintings, and for colouring of *sikki* and other objects, thus saving labours.

In Mithilā region. this wall-painting is practised by the folk women of upper caste people such as Brāhmana, Kāyastha, and Srotri homes. The lower caste people i. e. Scheduled and Backward Classes express their artistic sentiments and skills by certain utility articles. Some of these are prepared for use in festivities of upper caste people. The former is more prolific and important one. According to Archer paintings by the Brāhma have a delicate meandering line which enclose areas of brilliant colour—pink, green, yellow, lemon, blue, black etc. The figure reduced to fantastic geometric or vegetable forms, and of birds, animals and flowers. Paintings by the Kāyasthās, on the other hand, employ only one or

two colours—black and sometimes blood red. They rely on strong lines enlivened with hatching and sportings and the figure often set in panels, are firmly ranged in long procession round the wall. This wall-paintings has social and religious perspectives. So far the social perspective is concerned they are narrative in character. But most of *Kohabar-chitras* have glimpse of life, environment and nature. *Hari-Saun-Pujā-Kā-chitra* is really a kind of cosmic strip. This puja is based on *Gauri-Vrata* which is described in *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*<sup>1</sup> ( ब्रह्मवैवर्त-पुराण ). This Pujā is practised usually by young maidens of Mithilā till her marriage is performed. Generally, this *bhitti chitra* is painted in fast colours. The colour composition and delicacy of lines are superb. If we compare the wall-paintings of Mithilā with Rajput style of painting we will find that in both the paintings the eyes are stretched and elongated. They have pointed nose, narrow forehead etc. But in *Kohabar* of Bhojpuri area there is lack of such qualities in it. In other words Bhojpuri-*Kohabars* are plain and simple and devoid of ornamentation. The colour composition and linings are of ordinary nature. In one Bhojpuri folk-lore there is a description of use of nine types of colours by folk women in their *Kohabar* paintings. In another *Kohabar* folk-song, the colour of paddy and wheat are referred to for dyeing the different figurines.<sup>2</sup>

1. Br. Tr. Pur.

सर्वत्र विधानम् मत्तो वत्सनिशामय ।

ख्यातं गौरी व्रतं ताम मागे मांछि कृतं महत् ॥

2. पीसहुँ पीठखा हे सीना ; लिखी लाम्री कोहबर रे ॥



So far as the subject matter of this *Kohabar*-paintings are concerned there is a depiction of lotus flower and leaves (technically called *Purayin* in Mithila), *Palki*, Horse, Elephant, Goose, Peacock, *Pāna*, (batel-leaf) *Bans* (bamboo), Sun, Moon, Ganesh, Siva, Pārvatī Lakshmī etc. But here all the figures have got their own significance. The elephant, horse, or *palki*—all embody the sense of royalty and richness. The sun and moon represent for long life (*Dirgha-jīvan*), goose and peacock are symbols of welfare and calmness. *pana* and lotus for *subha-lakshana* (शुभ-लक्षण), *bans* is meant for future progeny (*vaṇsha-vṛdhi*) and so on. In Mithilī and Bhojpurī speaking areas the outer walls of the *Kohabar* is full of paintings which are rich with the scenes from rural life i. e. *palki* with Kahar, stylized fruit trees, mango, banana and dancing peacock, love-scene of Lord Krishna with Gopies. etc. According to Archer, the subject matter of *Kohubar*-paintings can be classified into two types : First, the Gods, who bring their blessings to the bridal pair—Siva and Pārvatī ; Rādhā and Krishna, Viṣṇu in all incarnatory forms ; Durgī, Kālī, Ganesh and Sesh-Nāga. To these sometimes added the figures of bride and bridegroom and their attendants. In second type, there are various symbols of fertility and prosperity (elephant, fish, parrot, turtles, sun and moon, bamboo tree and a great circular lotus flower). These symbols will, it is hoped, bring good fortune to the young couple and bless them with children. In the opinion of Archer, this paintings on the wall is a commoner act and of all the women of the

family. Certain among them gained reputation for their skills and women take the lead there in sketching the motifs and outlining of the designs onto a carefully prepared mud wall. The old women and the young maidens of the family use brushes made of torn clothes tied on to a stick and with it they reinforce the lines and fill in the colours.

So far as the question of origin of these *bhitti chitra* is concerned, no one can say when this art has begun. But it is known that this art is handed down from generation after generation. There is a custom in Mithil that after the marriage a girl must carry the paper designs of *bhittichitra* (which are aid-memories) to her husband's home, where they will reinforce the designs already current. Thus in words of Archer, the Mithil *Kohabar* paintings has varieties and inventiveness which make them perhaps the most sophisticated and elegant of all popular and folk-paintings of the State still current.

### Aripan

The alpan or line drawing on the floor is very famous and common folk-art in almost all the States of India. It has different nomenclatures according to different regions, such as alpan in Bengal, Mandala (माण्डल) in Rajasthan, Rangoli (रंगेली) in Gujrat, Chukapurni (चौक पूरना) in Bhojpur area of eastern U. P. and Bihar (South Bihar) and Aripan in Mithil region (North Bihar). This tradition of line drawing is very old one and is found in *Ghyasutra* and other *Śāstras* and commentaries. The word *Mandala* (माण्डल) is used for *aripan*. In *Brahma-Puran*<sup>1</sup> the

1. Brah. Pur.—18-12 ;

word *Bhumi-Sobhā* ( भूमि-शोभा ) has been used for *aripan*. In *Naisadha charitra*<sup>1</sup> the word *Alepan* ( आलेपन ) is used. The *aripan* is a corrupt form of *Alepan*. This *aripan* is drawn on the auspicious occasions of puja; *parva* or *vrata* and at the time of different *saṅskāras*.

The material which is used for *Alepan* is powdered rice made into paste with water. A paste is called "pūther". This is drawn by the help of fingers. Sometimes *sindur* or vermilion is also applied in it. In *aripan*, we can visualise many different shapes and forms of design. The outline of *aripan* has got Tantrik influence and inner features reflect the Śākta creed. For example, the red point shows prominence of a mother-Goddess. three inner triangles refer to Gauri. The subject matter of the *Bhumisobha* is to represent the natural phenomena and different and diverse objects, such as flowers (lotus), leaves, different trees, fruits, fishes, peacocks, snake (Nāga) sun, moon, gauri, ganesh etc. Besides these, there are other articles too which are used in daily worship such as shrine, foot-prints of Vishnu, Siva, lamp, conchshell, *trishula* (trident) etc.

In *aripan*, one can also observe many different geometrical shapes also, mainly, triangular, circular and other typical. Among the different *aripan* drawn on ground in connection with different festive occasions the prominent are: the *Tusari-Puja*, is meant for unmarried girls for having good husband. It is performed generally during *Makarsaṅkrānti*

to *Falgun-Saṅkarānti*. In the end of the Puja they draw *aripan* where a temple, moon, sun, *nabagraha* are shown. *Sājnha-aripan* is for worship of *Sandhyā-Devi*. Here whole *Brāhmāṇḍa* ( ब्रह्माण्ड ) is reflected in the form of a temple. In *Kalāyandevī-aripan*, village folks draw it in favour of the goddess of welfare technically called कल्याणदेई. Here we find symbols of sun, moon, *gouri*, *nabagraha* etc. In *Dasapāta-aripan* we have different designs of lotus flowers. Lotus flower on the top represents trinity, below that one the lotus having five petals refers *Pancha-deva* ( पञ्चदेव ) and the third lotus having seven petals represents *Saptarishis* ( सप्त-ऋषी ). *Sasthi-Pujā-aripan* is made when the young maiden becomes *Rajasvalā*. The *aripan* on this occasion symbolise the creation and destruction of the universe. The *Gatrā-sankarānti-aripan* refers to birth and death i.e. different phases of life, so that the people may not forget their duty. The *kojigarka-aripan* (using the *makhānā* leaf base) is done on a full-moon festival (near about September) just to welcome *Lakshmī*, the Goddess of wealth and prosperity. The same Goddess of wealth is welcomed in “*Dīvālī-aripan*” known in Mithilā as *Sukh-rātri-kū-aripan*. Again, *Swastik-aripan* is meant for blessing to the younger one. Besides these, there are many other occasions when the floor is decorated. Thus the *aripans* of Mithilā are indeed at once cosmic in significance and playful in expression. They betaken auspicious occasion, they express collective imagination and group fancy. In them the complex and gay are in union establishing a communication among participants in

ceremonies of which only the fringes can be felt by strangers. But in Bhojpurī regions of Bihar the *alepan* is called “*chauk-purnā* (चौक-पूराना). It is very simple, ordinary and devoid of ornamentation. It is mainly done by folk women, and also by the male of the barber by caste. This is done by wheat flour or powdered rice. In their *aripān* we find some geometrical figures too, such as circleangle, triangle etc. The lines are rough and colour composition are not very fine. Thus, the *aripāns* of Mithilā are more decorative than the floor paintings of Bhojpurī area. This *aripāns* are temporary decoration by means of colours dissolved in rice and water which lasts for a few hours only. It is generally made before the entrance of the house and in the principle room of the residence. It is one of those in which the young Hindu girls can exercises their talents.

### Sikki folk-art

In the ancient regions of Mithila i.e. Darbhanga and Muzaffarpur districts, the village women are engaged in preparing desired articles of golden colour *sikkī*-grass. From the study of Vedic and Smṛti literature, we learn, *kusha*-grass was used on auspicious occasions like marriage, puja and other festivities and in *sradāṭha*. It is also in existence now. Therefore, the use of *sikkī*-grass is not a new thing to the women of this ancient land. The study of the social custom prevalent among rural population of Mithila has interesting tradition. In this region the use of coloured and beautiful articles made of *sikkī*-grass is a general practice among the village folk. There was a tradition in this

region which is still continuing that the young maidens should know this art of *sikkī* wares prior to their marriages. So marriageable girls particularly acquire this skill from their elders. After marriage, the bride have to carry the colourful articles prepared by herself and also by her mother's and grandmother's to her husband's house and thereby she is highly respected in that family. Her own articles are displayed separately and their merits and demerits are described in comparison with the works of other daughters-in-law of the same house. Thus, in bridegroom's house the standard of the bride's family is measured according to the execution and fineness and colour of the *sikkī* articles (brought by her). This is the reason why this craft has survived the vicissitudes of time in North Bihar. The golden *sikkī*-grass, is found in abundance during the monsoon, is a kind of long stemmed grass found in wasteland of Mithilā area. In rainy season it reaches its full growth and upper portion of it is divided into pieces and preserved throughout the year for making *sikkī*-articles. After this, the grass can be dyed in many colours by native process of dyeing. The women of the village generally dye it, at present, in some important reactive colours such as black, blue, red, green, yellow etc. The women take great care in admixing the colours and using them in *sikkī*-ware. In olden days ladies used to prepare the colours out of natural flora and fauna, such as green from the juice of cripper leaves, red from red flower and so on.

This *sikkī*-ware is more or less the creation of folk women. Their imagination influenced by traditions

and religious beliefs. The Tantric influence can also be noted prominently in such works as *Bhairva-chakra*, *Kāla-chakra* etc. Some higher Gods and Goddesses and some symbolic representations of material world appear on the designs of *sikkī* ware. The *sikkī* work of Mithilā is an expression of the feelings of the folk-women. They look at nature, observe flora and fauna, study the life of animals and birds and human beings then they design different and diverse objects on it. This *sikkī* folk-art is described even in Maithilī folk-lore<sup>1</sup> in a beautiful manner.

### Colourful Masks

Dances and songs are very dear to the tribals. There are songs and dances for different occasions among the tribal people. Near Seraikella area there is a famous dance form called "*Chhau-dance*" which impersonates a character of gods, animals, birds, human being, rainbow, night etc. The word '*Chhau*' itself means "Mask." Thus mask is an essential element of this dance-drama. The preparation of colourful masks is a kind of folk-art of Bihar.

The *Chhau*-mask is made of dark clay found near the bank of Kharkaria river. The clay model of the character is fixed on small wooden plank and cooled for two or three days to harden it. A muslin gauze is pasted on it and over the gauze two or three layers of paper, alternating muslin

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1. सिक्की चिरब नहि हमयाब सजनी गे,  
 सिक्की नहि छोट परान सजनी गे ॥ १ ॥  
 मेहीं मेहीं सिक्किया बिछि बिछि चिरलो  
 सुन्दर बनेलो फूल डाल सजनी गे ॥ २ ॥

and paper and lastly a thick coating of the clay is pasted. The nose and eyes are fashioned by a sharp instrument (*karnī*). After the mould is dry the clay is scooped out from the hollow of the mask by the *karnī* and the mask is scrubbed, polished and painted. There are many village people who are engaged in this folk-art. Thus the mask takes symbolic possession of the object with growth and settled agricultural communities. In urban life and so in folk-life mask comes to be used in the service of entertainment too. They are a vehicle for possession of esoteric doctrines and interpretation of a new concept of the universe.

### **Kasida, Sujani and applique folk-art**

In India, folk-life like our folklore and folk-songs, the art of *kasida* and applique has been handed down from generation to generation. From the Vedic and Puranic literature, we come to know that, *kasida* (a kind of embroidery) was an ancient folk-art. In Vīṣaṇeyī Saṁhitā,<sup>1</sup> and Aitariya Brāhmaṇa<sup>2</sup>, there is reference of *Paisas* as (पेशस्त्रु) which is said to be embroidery work. This *kasida*-art is referred to by Megasthenes (3rd. century B. C.). In Ajanta paintings we find ladies having jacket on their bodies, which are probably decorated with *kasida* work. From one passage of Bīṇa's "Harsha-charita" we know that bodice or short jackets were embroidered with large pearls sewn into them. During Mughal period it was a most developed art. The Muslims gave fine touch and artistic beauty to this folk-art.

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1. Vaj. Sam.—30'1      2. Ait. Brah.—3/20.



In the society for the first time the needle work from most primitive time was used for joining and for strengthening Kasidī. These led to a perception of its ornamental possibilities, and from this the beautiful art of embroidery came into existence.

In Bihar, the *kāsidī* work is prepared by women all over the State for their personal use. The dress of everyday are (blouse; *sāri*, *dhoti*, *komor-bāndhā*, *orani* babies cap, *tūkiās*, musland-cover) usually embroidered. Generally this *kāsidī* work is done by women of the higher caste such as Brāhmana, and Rajputa. In Bhojpur speaking area this kasidī work is called Brāhmana-but *ब्राह्मण-बुटा*. In the Kasidī of this State we generally have three different types of stitches which originate fine distinct styles. In the *Jhīgali* or *Ghachuā* or *Jhhikā* or *Techā* (chain-stitch) type of work, firstly, the designs have been drawn on the cloth; and with the help of needle the design is made. In another word a chain stitch follow the guideline, earlier drawn on the cloth. The blouses of folk women are generally worked with chain stitch. The method in this Jhhikā type of work is a very complicated one and is not only limited to the design. But the village women are free to chose their designs on the cloth. The next variety is *Bharita* (भरीत) work. The folk women made this design on whole surface of the cloth. According to Mrs. J. Dhamija, Bihar Kasidī is similar to the Bīgh and Phulkarī embroidery of the Punjab. The embroidery here follows the wrap and weft of the woven materials; creating a parallel to the woven one.

In this particular Kāsidi pattern the designs are restricted one. These designs, more or less, are on the geometrical figures i.e. rectangle, square, or zig-zag lines. Besides these, there are some motifs of flora and fauna filled into geometrical pattern. Dhamija is of opinion that it is the neatness of the stitch and effective combination of colours by that an effect of richness is created. In this work, folk women usually applied white blue, red clothes and different coloured threads. There is another variety of Bharita work in which different geometrical motifs can be seen in less rigid form. In it, firstly, the design is drawn, then stitched by black thread, afterwards it is filled by different coloured threads. The third variety is *Tagomū* where women made the stitches by counting.

So far the designs of Kāsidi are concerned we find the designs of flora and fauna (lotus flower, rose and other flowers with leaves, small plant and creeper), birds and animals (peacock, small birds, parrot, horse, elephant, dog, tiger, cow etc). In some fine Kāsidi, we find small pieces of glass are fixed by threads. In Bhojpurī area of Bihar in every variety of Kāsidi the stitches are very fine, whereas in Kāsidi of Mithilī area the stitches are very rough. It resembles fine, neat and rough designs made on cloth. The different and diverse designs which are known as *kañghī-butī*, *pulorā-butī*, *chanda-butiyā*, *aṭha-butiyā*, *tārā-butiyā*, *mandir-butiya*, *solaha-butiyā*. The different borders in this region are called *laharia* border, *aṅgarājī* border, *kaṭa-churiyā* border etc.

Sujanī is a peculiar thing of Bihar and of eastern

U.P. This Sujani is made of old torn clothes. First, torn saries and dhuties are stitched on all the four sides. Thus, after quilting the central portion is stitched with coloured threads. The folk women made different types of beautiful designs on border and in middle portion of the sujani. For making different designs the women use the cross stitches. These designs have a natural motif, such as creepers, small plant with gamala, different birds and animals (pigeon, peacock, fish, snake, tiger, cow, elephant, horse etc.). If we compare this sujani with Kanth of Bengal we will find that kanth is a delicate and intricate one, whereas Sujanis of Bihar are simple bordering in conception. The subject matter of this design is the concern of everyday life.

### Applique

The applique work has got ancient tradition. From Abul Fazal's *Ain-i Akbari* we know that during the time of war or at the time of hunting (shikar) the tents (khems or tambas) were used, which have different types of broades patch work. The Shamiyana were also prepared in those days which is made of patch work, known as applique designs. Some of the designs and motifs prepared on the Kanths are of Persian origin. In kanth i. e. side wall of the Shamiyana has got symmetrical motifs of flora and fauna, birds and animals. The process of preparation is peculiar one. Firstly, the design is made of desired coloured clothes then it is cut out from the simple cloth. After that the women stitched these

small pieces in beautiful manner on the cloth of the tents. When entire pieces are stitched, the design is formed. For Simiyana three prominent coloured cloths are used in Bihar. The cloth which is placed on background is generally of dark shade i. e. red, deep orange, etc. Then the motifs are worked out in white patches. The village folk women prepared the patch works without uniform similarity. There are two main types of applique prepared in Bihar. One is "Katwā" or Katawa type where the cloth is cut out into different shapes and attached in the same manner as the material for Simiyana. Here the work is far more complicated and delicately executed. Secondly, applique of strips material has a single motif. This is also made from the cut out of pieces of cloth. Cloth attached to the body are given for creating patterns on the surface of the basic materials. The applique work is mainly done in and around Patna City and Dīghwara (Saran District). If one compares this applique of Bihar with the applique of Kathiawar he will find that both have similarity. Kathiawar applique has its origin in patch work where coloured pieces are left over and are stitched together not to create an effect ; but to pieces out an item with the help of remnants (or to repair by adding on patches to damaged clothing). These applique designs are cut out of different pieces of stitched on to the basic material. The Bihar style cloth and of "Katwā" i. e. the stitching of other piece of cloth of the same size for the background materials which are cut out into different pattern and stitched to the ground material, is not practised here. Here

the motifs are worked out in brilliant colours and generally stitched on to a white background. The designs are taken from the natural surroundings as well as from daily life.

### Doll Folk-art

From Vatsyana's "*Kāmasūtra*" we know that doll-making was popular in Hindu society. He had used the word "बालक्रीडन कानि". But it is very difficult to determine the origin of doll-making. The doll is usually understood to be a miniature of human figure representing a phase of life or character. It is mainly an object for children's play specially for those who are not even teen aged. The main purpose of this doll making is just to give the growing child (male or female) a means to develop its racial consciousness inherent in its national or domestic traditions. In every village of Bihar the folk women usually prepare the dolls for both the sexes. The process of doll making is very simple one. The only torn cloth and *bhushi* (husk) are used for making dolls. Thus, it requires a very little capital and technical skill. In Mithili area ; the dolls made by the folk women are much artistic than the dolls of Bhojpurī speaking area. The Maithilī doll is called "*Purātan-doll*". The anatomical feature is to some extent proportionate and dresses are generally dhotī, kurtī, bagalbanāī (or mirzāī) for male and for female sari and blouses. Generally, during the occasion of "*Durāgaman*" of the girl these dolls are sent to the bridegroom's house as token of gift for the children of that family. Hence, it was the practice in Mithili area

that young maidens have to learn this art of doll making from their mother and grand-mother. In Bhojpurī speaking area the girls performed a doll festival which is known as “*Bhāīyādīja*”.

Thus, the doll accelerate the healthy growth of child's mental faculty as it comes in direct contact with the miniature of the realities of nature and it developed in children the sense of art, harmony, colour and beauty of form.

### Some Minor folk-arts

There are many other minor domestic arts which are in practice from time immemorial, namely the applications of Mehndī in feet and palm. Mah var in feet, Godan (tattooing) in hands, leg and forehead.

### Mehndi-Designs

In ancient India, the beautifying of a person was raised to an art. Subtle sense was explored and cultivated to respond to the ingenuous device of paint, perfumed and jewels. *Mehndi* (or *henn*) had been known to the Arab world since the most ancient times. The mummies of Egyptain king showed the royal toe-hail dyed with deep ground red *Henn*. But in India, this Mehndi established its place as the aid to erotic beauty in women. By the end of the 13th century A. D. the practice of applying Mehndi was in vogue and it was at its height during the Romantic and Chivalric Age (depicted in the miniature of Mughals and Rajputas). In Rajasthan paintings and in Mughal and Kangra schools of

painting, Mehndi is seen as decorating the hands and feet of women. The warm dry climate of the north was well suited to its growth. Every northern home cultivated its own patch of the short heavily leaved bushes. In U. P. and Kashmīr the word "*Mehndi-lagān*" is used in the sense of *Suhāga* (marriage). In Rajasthan, in the month of Chaitra (March-April) a festival for maidens, known as "*Gāṅgaur*" is held. During auspicious occasion like marriage it is essential that the bride's palm should be filled with different Mehndi designs.

The prominent features of Mehndi is its property of imparting cool to the body. The dark green leaves are plucked, washed and grounded to the thick paste with water. This paste applied by straw needle is always cold and its odour resembles strangely, the aroma of wet earth. It lowers the body temperature and is often used as to relax the nerves. It lasts for several weeks. In it all the technique is at hands of folk women. *Vatsyana* in his work "*Kamasūtra*" had referred to the art of decorating the body with the designs of different motifs. In Sanskrit literature, there is a reference about fifteen different designs of Mehndi such as *pushpakam* (flower garlands), *makirkaṁ* (crocodile), *vallī* (creeper), *chakrā* (wheel), *chitra* (picture) etc. Besides this, there are many other designs of flora and fauna, symbolical to human figurine, birds, animals and many other geometrical shapes, which are in practice in different regions of Bihar, specially the Mithilī and Bhojpurī speaking areas. There

is one very interesting verse<sup>1</sup> in a legendary form is associated with this *henā* (Mehndi). It describes the beauty of the body after application of Mehndi. Similarly a person after severe hardship (as *henā* is grounded for application) will himself prove as experienced man. This art of Mehndi is very popular one in the Bhojpuri folk-lore<sup>2</sup> where there is a reference of application of Mehndi in hands.

### Mahavar

Like Mehndi, the application of Mahavar is often used by the ladies of higher society. Even the ladies of the lower strata used it on auspicious occasion like Munjan ceremony, Vivaha or on the other festive occasions. In Bhojpuri speaking area of Bihar, the application of Mahavar or *Ita* is called "*Goda-Bharanā*". In Sanskrit literature the word "*Alaktaka*" has been used for Mahavar. This *Ita* has an ephemeral nature and it faded with the first wash. In ancient India the application of Mahavar is very essential for court dancers or the dancers of the temple and the prostitute. The folk women generally applied this Mahavar on the upper portion of the feet. Usually the designs are of creepers, small flowers, swastika or some geometrical designs.

1. रंग लाती हँ हेना ( मेहदी ), पत्थर पर घिस जाने के बाद ।  
आदमी बनता है इन्सा, ठोकरें खाने के बाद ॥
2. लट उलझी सुलझी जा रे बलामा,  
हथओ में मेहदी लगी है ॥



### Godana Tattooing

The tattooing folk-art is very ancient one. This is mainly meant to decorate and make the body attractive one. In olden days it was the matter of shame for the women not having tattooing their bodies. In different regions of Bihar, after marriage of young maidens, the tattooing is considered to be an essential thing because it is a symbol or insignia of Saubhāgaya. In village area, the women whose profession is to make tattooing, are generally of Netui tribe. In olden days, these Netui women made different and diverse designs by the help of thin needle. The process for it is as follows : First, they sank the needle in black colour (prepared with the nature of milk and dhutur fruit) and then they pinched it in hands of young maidens and gradually they made the designs. Really it was a very painstaking process. But now with advent of machine the tattooing process too has been easier than before. These designs are generally of geometrical shapes (square, circle, *vindu*, etc), flowers, creepers, small birds and animals etc. With the progress of civilization the tattooing is in the way of a declining stage, but the writing of name in the hands of a male person through the same process is still in practice in Bihar.

### Tribal Art

The tribal youths and women are fond of different types of ornaments. Women are generally fond of sticking different flowers in their hair to decorate it. Cheap brass or silver ornaments are also found in ears and nose, round their necks, waist and feet. They also wear necklace of glass

bead. The wooden comb is in practice for tightening hair. During marriage ceremony tribal people decorate the walls and floors of their houses. They decorate the house by rice powder when any important ceremony is to take place. During different ceremonies they also decorate the *poi kalasa* with rice powder. Usually the male or female who are barber by caste come to decorate the *Mandapa* during marriage ceremony (*sangāi*) in tribal area. They also decorate the walls of *Kohabar-ghar* with many folk designs. These designs have a natural motifs. They also make designs of flora and fauna, geometrical figures, birds, animals and others.

During the festivals like Holi, Sahrul, Dassehr, they have fairs at different places. In these fairs they sell different types of terracottas, metallic images, bamboo works, and many other articles of folk-arts and crafts produced by them. Now Adivasis, under the impact of external influences, are forgetting their traditional folk-arts and crafts which are replacing by such arts and crafts that have urban influences.

In a nutshell, we can say that, the folk-arts and crafts call for great sensitivity, patience, and service before results are produced. They really speak of an age where dignity lay in silence and beauty. They reveal the creative urge of folk community and disclose their aesthetic carvings. In them is embodied the accumulated knowledge and experience handed down traditionally from father to son, and from mother to daughter. They are, in short, our precious legacy and play valuable part in our tradition art, culture and heritage.

# Folk Dances of Bihar

By

**Hari Uppal**

The folk dance traditions in our society had almost vanished. The educated folk looked down upon the amusemental folk-arts and the folk-artists. Even the other day, dancing such as survived, was confined among a *demi-mondaine* or professional group, at the most an entertainment for the idle rich and the lower classes. In the villages generally for the elites folk dances were taboo. But recently there has been a change in outlook.

After Independence a new awareness toward traditional culture with a narrow nationalist spirit had developed and an eager search for oral traditional literature, arts and crafts, songs and dances are getting fashion. This coincided with many of our efforts. The beauty and significance of the different folk dances thrilled many and gave them an edge to labour for cultivating unexplored items of folk dances. Realising how important the folk dances were for the tribal and the less advanced people, and how their substitution by inferior forms of self-expression would spell ruin, we felt strongly that something ought to be done to preserve this dance forms in as original character as possible. With this end in view we undertook a comprehensive survey of the folk dances of Bihar, the first of its kind in the State.

and a report on the basis of that survey is given under to honour the request of the editor.

### Three Streams

There are three distinct streams of folk dance tradition in Bihar. One prevalent in Videha, present Mithila, mainly inspired by the songs of the poets ; the second is to be found in south Bihar and is confined mostly among the Adivasis, closer to nature and social institutions or rituals ; thirdly, the Chhau dance of Seraikella and other regions of south Bihar.

Music and dance appear to have been greatly valued in Videha from early times. But there is no historical account of that and till we come to the time of Maharaja Nayandeva (1097-1133), who was the first to patron of the same. It is he who developed the popular *ragas* on regular lines. His work, *Saraswati-Hridaya-Alankar-Har* (manuscript may be found in the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona), was written after he had established himself as the ruler of Mithila. After him, Jayadeva (12th century), the celebrated author of *Gita-Govinda*, exercised great influence on the evaluation of dance and music of Mithila. There were numerous commentators and imitators of his melodies, the greatest among them being Vidyapati (who again in his turn influenced the young Tagore).

### Jayata

Maharaja Shiv Singh (15th century) appointed Jayata to render in dance the poems of Vidyapati. For a time, music and dance developed *pari passu*,

a number of new developments in the traditional *rāgas* and *rāginis* occurred. The songs of some of the poets continued to be sung in every household in Mithila, as a mark of a continuing culture. Some of the *rāgas*, which may be claimed as special to Bihar, are 'Nachāri', 'Phag', 'Chaita', 'Purbi'. Of these, Nachari owes its origin to Vidyapati. It seems that a special kind of dance, with very few body-movements *Bhūva-nritya*, also flourished in those days.

However, the folk dances of Mithila may broadly be divided into (a) religious, (b) social and (c) sectarian type. In the religious-type of dance the gods and goddesses are invoked through dance, accompanied by folk-songs and musical instruments like *dhol* (drum), *Pipalu* (shehnai-like instrument), *Pukhawaj*, *Danka*, etc. In this type of dance, minimum use is made of musical instruments and the *Nachaniya* (dancer) does not hum the tune. We have used the word dance to denote *nach* here. The *Ramlila-nach*, *Bhagata-nach*, *Kirtaniya-nach*, *Kimjawi-nach*, *Naradi-nach*, *Vidyapati-nach*, *Puja-art-nach* etc. come under the category of religious folk dance.

Group dances for men and women separately as well as mixed are social in character. The group dances for men are accompanied by songs and musical instruments. Here every care is taken to see that the footwork is in tune with the *swar* and *tal* of music. This rule is not followed so strictly in the case of group dances for women. The women dance in the courtyard, forming a circle with their hands tucked into each other's, in which pose they dance and sing merrily. Among dances

for women, mention may be made of *Jhijhiya-nach*, *Jatajutin-nach*, *Samarchawko-nach*, etc. The only mixed-group dance is the *Saturi-nach* of Mithila, apart from, of course, the mixed dances of the tribal folk. There is also a family-dance called *Bakho-nach*, in which, the husband and wife join in a dance on the occasion of the birth of a son or of a similar festive occasion.

There are also dances exclusively for the lower caste groups, such as *Chamar notua-nach*, *Kaualamai-nach*, *Dampha-Basuli-nach* (exclusively for shoemakers), *Muhrail-nach* (for the *Mallah* or the boatman), *Salhush-nach* (for the Mushahar caste) and *Jharni-nach* (for the Muslims). Besides, there are dances like *Parmariya-nach*, *Vedeshia-nach* and *Kathputali-nach*. The *Vedeshia* was lately introduced in Mithila by Bhikhari Thakur, a folk dramatist from Bhojpuri areas where it became quickly popular.\*

### Tribal Dance

The Adivasis (original dwellers) of south Bihar in spite of the rapid strides of Vedic culture in the past and the recent incursion of Christian missionary activities, have on the whole, maintained their own ancient and primitive art forms. Their outlook on life, in recent times, have been modified by conversion and modern education, but their emotional urges have remained much the same and

\* The author has not taken trouble to elucidate the folk dances of Magahi and Bhojpuri areas of the State, whatever worth they may have. Editors.

find an uninhibited expression in their various performances of dance. Dance to them is not merely a means of amusement for passing the time, it is the very breath of their life, which sophisticates can envy rather than emulate. Like majority people in Bihar, the Adivasis are mainly agriculturists. Two of their main festivals are the Sairul and Karam. Their songs are generally accompanied with dances, changing according to the different seasons. Almost every village has its dancing floor or platform, usually under the shade of some big tree. It is not that the Adivasi people dance only during the festivals. They dance, just as the mood takes them, almost in every day. Of course these are not meant for patrons or entertaining anybody. They do not make a show or business of it to earn a little money. It is the dance of their life, the dance of their heart.

The Santhals, who constitute the greatest single aboriginal group in Bihar, are born singers and dancers. At every step or stage of their life, there is song and dance. Their four most important dance festivals are—(i) Maghi Parva, (ii) Dasia Parva, (iii) Ba-Parva and (iv) Karam Parva.

Next to the Santhals, the Oraons and the Mundas are important dancing tribes of south Bihar. Some of their dances are similar with Santhals in character. Among these are : *Pika*, *Jadur*, *Karma* and *Jatra* dances. The *Paika* dance is a part and parcel of Munda culture. The *Jadur* is performed on the occasion of the Sarhui festival in April. On this occasion the men-folk collect wood and flowers from the forest for worship. Thereafter, they assemble at a

place selected for the purpose of dancing. The selected spot is known as *Giriwah* in the local dialect. They dance the whole night through, and the day after, the party goes from house to house, dancing and planting some flower trees in every house they visit.

Not to be forgotten are the dances of the minor tribes like Birjia, Asur, Birhor, Savaria-Paharia, Malpaharia, Korwas, Parahia and so on. Some of these tribal people like the iron smelters dance. The Asurs or the well-known monkey-catchers, the Birhors, the Hos and the Kisans have their distinctive choreography expressive of their milieu.

### Karam

The most important festival among the Oraons and Mundas is Karam, which has given the name to the dance for the occasion. On the *ekadasi* (eleventh day of full-moon) in the month of Bhadra, the branch of a Karam tree is ceremonially planted and after worshipping the tree men and women alike dance. The entire community, children included, take their favourite drink, *haia* (rice-beer) in high spirits, and continue to dance for at least three days at a stretch. The *Jutra* dance is performed before and after the rains. The *Paika* is performed on the occasion of marriage. But only menfolk take part in it. It is essentially a mock-fight dance, and the dancers use artificial swords and shields.

The Oraon-Munda dancers have, however, started loosing their rootedness and originality. Their pure dance tunes and steps in Bihar can now be found



only in restricted areas like Bero, Keru, Mandar and the western part of Ranchi district.

Like the tribals, the Mahatos, Harijans, Napits, Ghasis, Mandals, etc., also celebrate the Karam festival. Their womenfolk dance round the Karam plant. There are also two other kinds of dance, (a) the Rangin and the (b) Shastriya, which are to be found among both the tribal and non-tribal group.

### Nachni

There are again semi-professional dances like the Nachni and the Natua dances. The Nachni (concubinage). a female, dances with a male partner, called the Rasik (Harlequin). Two male accompanists sing and clap while the Nachni and her Rasik dance, to the tune of *shehnai*, *nagara*, etc. Both Nachni and Rasik hold handkerchiefs in their hands and tie a sash round their waist. The Nachni performs her dance at different festivals and seasons and she sings while she dances. The language of the song is in the *Pach-parganiya* dialect, a mixture of Hindi and Kurmal. On the Kartik Purnima, (full-moon of Nov.-Dec.) all the Nachnis and Rasiks gather at Silli (a townlet in the Ranchi district) and perform Rasa, basically a Vaishnava dance organised generally by the Vaishnavas.

The Natua dance is basically a duet and the performers dance to the accompaniment of *dhol*, *shehnai* and *nagara*. The first item of the dance is known as Natua-Kachal.

### Chhau

The Chhau dance of the Seraikela-Kharsawan

region is essentially a folk dance (in which sometime royalty took part). In the local dialect the word 'Chhau' means mask. It conceals not only the person, sometimes royal, but also the sex of the performer. The Adivasis have their own version of Chhau, but they call it *Shastriya-nritya*, and they, at times, do not use the mask, as in Kharaswan. The use of songs, a common feature of all folk dances, is wholly absent in Chhau. Here the dancers express the mood or theme only through the language of the body, accompanied by such instruments as the *vina*, flute, drum, *nagara*, etc. Thus a Chhau dancer has to rely mainly or exclusively on his skill and excellence in dancing, that begins with foot-work which is then taken up by the movement of the body, and finally the whole body, including the hands and the head, comes into full play to express the theme, story or situation.

### Final Thought

But all these folk dances have their roots in the past and usually among the lives of the lowly. Have our modern times, of which we are both proud and ashamed of with their agony and ecstasy, their chaos and challenges, anything to match? That is a question to which an answer has to be sought for. The answer will be available only when a creative faith and peaceful social order return. When and how that will happen is anybody's guess.

# Folk-Gods of Bihar

By

Ganesh Chaubey

The rural population of Bihar consists mostly of orthodox Hindus who claim to follow the religion enjoined by Vedas, Puranas, Smritis and other ancient scriptures and perform worship of their gods as laid down in them.

The Vedic Aryans adopted a simple mode of worship. They used to sing hymns in praise of their gods and offer oblation in sacrificial fire to propitiate them. These were the ways of the learned *rshis* or sages but there must have been some gods of the unsophisticated masses about which little is known from the ancient and the oldest religious texts.

During the Pauranic age a large number of gods and goddesses are found their places in Hindu pantheon. Temples were erected wherein the anthropomorphic statues or idols of gods were placed. Stories regarding the origin of gods were invented, verses in their praise composed, and the mode of worship defined. The *Tantras* added many things to this. Ram, Sita, Kali, Krishna, Balaram, Radha, Rukmini, Vishnu, Lakshmi, Surya, Brahma, Saraswati, Siva, Parvati, Ganesh, Bhairon, Hanumana, Narasinha, Durga, Tara, Kalratri, Sapta-matrikas and many other gods and goddesses were worshipped and are still being worshipped by countless devotees, both literates

and nonliterate, as directed by the *pujaris* or priests of temples. The mode of worship, followed in these temples are based on treatises and worshippers have to follow, more or less, the instructions of the priests. Those who keep *Vratas* also worship the presiding deity of the same on the day of fasting or as laid down in the *Puranas*. In fact, gods mentioned in the religious books are the product of sophisticated and developed mind, but the strong influence of folk conception of gods on them cannot be denied.

The common folk have their own pantheon of gods which goes side by side with the pantheon of *Pauranic* gods without being disturbed from any source. The pantheon of folk-gods consist of of spirits of the dead ancestors, deified heroes, natural objects, minor gods and godlings of primitive origin, both benevolent and malevolent, and even the *Pauranic* gods transformed in such a way as to suit the folk idea and mode of worship. Tree, animal, stone and fetish worship is commonly practiced and one may even find traits of totem worship. Folk-gods and goddesses are generally represented by crude idols of stone, wood, brick or clay and they are enshrined in *mandaps* or huts under the shady tree or brick platforms in open space where they are worshipped. Offerings to the gods, which have no *asthan* or adode of their own, are made in *kurkhei* or ploughed field. The worship is performed with the help of a *bhagata* or village priest of the god or by the votary himself or herself. Articles of offerings and mode of worship are such as are coming down from generation to generation.

The primitive man has to reside in forests and passed his days amidst flora and fauna, both hostile and helpful, and had to face vagaries of nature affecting his life adversely. Such acts of nature were attributed to be caused by spirits of these inanimate objects. The conception of awe and reverence to spirits was the cause of the origin and development of different cults and consequent of religion.

There are different kinds of gods with different functions assigned to them. The worship of some of the gods are common throughout the State of Bihar while some others are confined to particular localities. Some of the castes have gods of their own. Different families belonging to the same caste worship different gods. Even the same god is worshipped by the different castes with the different articles of worship or offerings.

A short description of some of the folk-gods and goddesses of rural Bihar is given below.

### **Village gods**

Each village has tutelary god of its own. These gods are believed to protect villagers from the epidemic, fire, and other calamities and in return, they are offered annual worship in the Hindu months of Shrawan or Ashwin and occasionally after passing off the marriages and other ceremonies peacefully. The recovery from long illness, the birth of a child to a barren woman, and fulfilment of wishes of votaries also entitled a god to receive offerings. Those who learn art of witchcraft and exorcism has also to propitiate village gods.

Among the pantheon of village gods, mention may be made of Brahma, Mai or Mahamaya and Devi. The *asthan* or abode of these gods are *mandops* or huts made of mud and thatch or bricks and tiles commonly beneath a *pipal* or a banyan tree situated at some distance from the human habitation in the village, the construction and maintenance of which are done by villagers from subscriptions among them. The deity in the *mandop* is represented generally by clay and brick mounds known as *piriya*.

Each village has *bhagata* or devotee who is said to be possessed by the god when he remembers him. In that case he shakes his body in trance and speaks on behalf of the god and answers questions of votaries. While he does so drums and cymbals are beaten and singing of ballads, that are composed to praise the gods and goddesses goes on. Sometimes it so happens that a deity appears in dream of a *bhagata* and asks him to arrange for its *asthan* and demands its worship. He obeys and a new god is introduced in the pantheon of village god. If he disobeys, he faces the consequences.

### Brahma

Brahma is the chief god among the pantheon of village gods. He is purely a folk-god and has nothing to do with that *Brahma*, who is the Creator, mentioned in the Pauranic literature. It is said that if a Brahman or Bhumi-har dies by burning himself or is devoured by a tiger and is deified, he is worshipped as *Brahma*. Such Brahma is named after his original name while he was in human form. V. S. Agarawal was of the opinion that *Yukshas* are being

worshipped in the form of *Bir Brahma* in every village to which the hero cult was added later on. The offerings of *Brahma* consists of sweets, *khir* or rice boiled in milk and sugar, flowers etc. On the full-moon day of *Shrawan* he is offered fry of seven corns known as *Satabhuja*. Earthen horse is also offered to him by his votaries. A white-kid is let off after chopping a portion of its ear as a mark of its being sacrificed to the god.

### Mai or Mahamaya

*Mai* is the mother goddess, origin of which has been traced back to the Indus Valley civilization on the basis of seals of nude female gods found in excavation. The seven clay mounds in the *mandop* of the goddess represent seven sisters of the goddess. It reminds us of *Sapta matrikas* of *Tantras* and *Purāns*. She is offered worship in the bright half of *Ashwin Navaratra*. (Oct.-Nov.) Her offerings consist of flowers, sweets, glass bangles, *patori* (coloured cloth), ear-ring of palm-leaves, and vermilion. Kids and pigeons are sacrificed to her. If a young he-buffalo is to be sacrificed, it is let off after cutting a portion of its ear. Those who worship the goddess after fulfilment of their wishes, cover the clay mounds with red cloth, fill seven earthen cups with corns and put a bangle in each cup. The worship accompanies ballads composed of bearing in mind of the goddess.

### Same

*Same* may be identified with *Shyama* of the *Tantras*. Her *piriya* or mound is located outside the *mandop* of *Mahamaya*. She is worshipped by

untouchable castes such as Dusadhs, Chamars, Doms, Methors etc. A pig is sacrificed to her by piercing through a pointed bamboo peg in its throat which denotes that the worship of this goddess originated at a time when the use of iron was not known.

### Minor Godlings

Each village has a *devi* of its own with a different name and function allotted to each of them. Besides, there are several minor godlings who are worshipped in villages in one form or other. A few of them are described under one by one :

1. *Bhasmi Devi*—The word '*bhasma*' means 'ashes'. The temple of this goddess is situated in the village Panapur in Muzaffarpur district, where kids were sacrificed and thrown into a trench of blazing fire to be reduced to ashes on a particular date. A few years back, a Vaishnava *Sadhu* picketted at the temple and stopped the animal sacrifice. Now only sweets are offered to *Devi*.

2. *Banjari*—She is the goddess of traders or cartmen. A cartman before oiling the axle of his cart, drops a few drop of oil saying "Jai Banjari." Near her *asthan* or abode people offer dried twigs and stalk of paddy.

3. *Dhelahi Devi*—'*Dhela*' means 'a clod.' To please this godling clods are thrown near the *asthan* of *Devi* which is located under a tree.

4. *Ghorahi Devi*—'*Ghora*' means 'a horse.' Clay horses are offered to the goddess along with other offerings on the fulfilment of wishes.



5. *Hathi Mai*—Her *asthan* is situated in the jungle of Pipara in Don valley in the district of Champaran. She is offered an earthen elephant. The young he-buffalo is also sacrificed to her.

6 *Chirkutahi Devi*—‘*Chirkur*’ means ‘a rag’. The passers-by offer piece of rag to her while passing by her *asthan*. She is a presiding deity of cold.

7. *Sati Dai*—The woman who burns herself alive with her deceased husband is termed as ‘*Sati*’. She is worshipped by the people of locality specially with the members of the family to which she belongs. Some 170 years ago, a lady of the family of the contributor of this article became *Sati* and the tract of land where she burnt is known as *Sativad*. It is said that formerly a *Chunari* or spotted *Sari* were offered to her in worship. But now her worship has fallen into disuse. A similar *asthan* of *Sati* is located in village Dudhara in Saran district. The number of such *Sativads* may be several in the State.

8. *Laur Baba*—Asiokan pillars at different places in the district of Champaran are regarded as club of Bhimsen, of the hero of Mahabharat, are worshipped by the people of the locality for more physical strength.

### Family gods

A folk deity which is worshipped by a particular family and *asthan* or abode of which is situated in a non-residential house of the homestead that is *deoghar* of that family is regarded as its family god.

### Sokha

*Sokha* is the family god of upper caste Hindus and is worshipped by Brahmans, Rajputs, Kayasthas

and Bhumihars. They are known as *Sokhaitis* and they abstain from wine and palm juice (toddy). In such families where *Sokha* is the principal deity and *Banni Goreya* and *Hanumana* are auxiliary gods, the *asthan* of *Banni* is located near that of *Sokha*. Hanuman's mound with a bamboo flag post is situated in the courtyard. The *asthan* of *Goreya* finds place outside *deoghar* or deity room. Rest of the upper caste Hindus have adopted Kali, Durga, Kalratri, Narasimha and others as family gods and goddesses.

*Sokha* is worshipped annually in the month of *Shrawan* and offerings of *Chapati* or bread prepared in ghee or oil and *Khbir* or rice boiled in milk and *Shakkar* or fine treacle, clove arcanut, cardamom and flowers are made. The other articles of offerings are *dhoti* coloured with red ochre, *janeo* or sacred thread and *khavam*, pair of wooden sandal. A white-kid is sacrificed to *Sokha* and its bones etc. left after taking *prasad* is buried in *deoghar*. *Prasad* is eaten only by family members of those who worship *Sokha*.

Special feature of *Sokha's* worship is *humar*. A person who takes a vow to offer *hamar* after recovery from long illness, requisitions the services of a *bhagata* on the date fixed for the worship. The *bhagata* wears a new cloth, takes a stick in his hand and remembers *Sokha*. Then he is possessed by *Sokha*. He takes an earthen dish with a large number of lighted wicks in the centre. He fills his mouth with heated cow-ghee and blows it on wicks originating huge flames. Those suffering from long illness or troubled by ghosts and

witches and barren women take such flame on their body. On the next day in the morning the *arghya* or offering of cow's milk is given by *bhagata* to the sun-god.

There is a legend about the origin of *Sokha*. It is said that *Brahma* was acting as a priest in the wedding of Siva and Parvati. Seeing the beauty of Parvati Brahma was passioned and his semen came out and fill in the sacrificial fire from which *Sokha* was born. *Sokha* is an important god and is held in high respect. The worship of *Sokha* and *Goreya* was prevalent in the seventeenth century A. D. as is known from works of Dharani Das, a Hindi saint-poet who decried the kid sacrifice to *Sokha* and use of wine in worship of *Goreya*.

### Banni

Though *Banni* is an auxiliary god of upper caste Hindus, she is the principal deity among most of the lower caste peoples as also of the untouchables. The word *Banni* means a goddess of forest, but her worship is common in plains. Offerings are made to her consists of bread and *kur*. Sacrifice of a she-kid is also made if the means of devotee so permit.

### Goreya

*Goreya* is a compound word consisting of 'go' meaning a cow, and 'rai' meaning a king, that is the protector of cow. It is said that during the Muslim rule, Hindus were oppressed and forcibly converted. Hindu girls were snatched from their parents and married by Muslims. Then Hindus introduced the worship of *Goreya* to whom pigs were sacri-

ficed. As pigs are taboo to Muslims, they detested the family where Goreya was worshipped. Hence the worship of Goreya is almost universal among Hindus of Bihar. However, Durga Shankar Prasad Singh 'Nath' has identified *Goreya* with a deified Army General of Dusadh caste who was killed by Paramar Rajputs. Goreya is worshipped with the ball made of *marua* or millet. The lower caste Hindus sacrifice pig to him either by cutting its throat or by means of *jhatak* that is catching its head and dashing body in the air and thus separating the head from the body.

### Hanuman

Hanuman is worshipped with balls made of bread and thread. His flagpost is changed either in the month of *Shrawan* or on any festive occasion.

### Karikh

Karikh is the family god of Ahirs or milkmen caste. Among Ahirs those who abstain from wine and palm-juice drinking worship *Karikh* along with *Mira*. They are called *Surajaha* or worshipper of sun-god as *Karikh* is regarded as an incarnation of sun. Those who take toddy among Ahirs, worship Banni and Goreya.

Karikh is worshipped on the first day of *Makar* or *Mesha Samkranti*. On *Makar Samkranti* day, rice, ginger, *urad* (pulses) and *til* (sesame) and on *Mesha Samkranti* day, *chatua* (flour or barley) and molasses are offered to which are later on consumed by worshippers as *prasad*. Similar offerings are made by Ahirs of Shahabad district to *Kirap Baba*.

The worship of Karikh on big scale is performed occasionally. A date is fixed for it and worship goes on for consecutive three days. *Khir* is placed in eleven earthen cups, out of which *Khir* ten cups are offered to *Karikh* and one to *Mira*. Other articles of offerings are—eleven sets of clove arecanut, cardamom and sweets. On the last day of worship, *dali* or basket with articles of offerings and *arghyas* are made to sun-god and a white-kid is sacrificed. It is a curious thing that the worshippers of Karikh while abstain from worshipping Banni and Goreya, worship *Mira*, a deified Muslim hero, the identity of which being not clear to them. Karikh is also worshipped by some *Mallahs* or fishermen family, more or less on the same line.

As informed by S. D. Ojha, in the district of Shahabad, Ahirs of several villages collect funds from subscription among them and worship *Kashidas Baba*, who is offered *Khir* prepared purely by milk. A feast is also held at the end of the working. It is a community worship."

### Gobanai Baba

Gobanai Baba is worshipped by certain Ahir families of Darbhanga district. His temple is situated in village Mahulia at a distance of six miles in the east of Darbhanga town by the side of river Kamala.

It is said that Gobanai, a cowherd, was cursed by his sister and consequently, he was devoured by a tiger after a dual fight. The victim was deified. Persons whose cows and buffalos do not mate and give birth to calves or fall ill take a vow to

worship him. The descendants of *Gobanai Baba* move from village to village carrying his statue. They sing the ballads of Gobanai and beg alms and worship him from its proceeds. They also worship *Karu Baba* by lighting two earthen lamps on the full-moon day of Kartik in Gausaghat where a fair is also held in his honour.

### Ganinath Gobindji

Ganinath Gobindji is the family god of *Kanus*, a grocer by caste, who does not take wine and toddy. Rest of *Kanus* worship *Banni* and *Goreya*.

The worship of Gobind is performed on Saturday falling after Janmashtami. Offerings include *jansa* (sacred thread), sweets, cow-milk, a stool of mango wood and a bamboo umbrella. Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, is also worshipped on the occasion and she is offered a *sari*, a blouse, and earrings made of palm leaves. The worship on large scale is performed only after it is promised. Female members of the family do not take part in the worship, but they are entitled to partake *prasad*.

*Telis* or Oilmen caste worship Brahma and Narasimha as their family gods, who are offered *laddus* or balls made of flour. *Kalwars* or Ironsmiths worship goddess Kali.

Family gods of *Malluh* or fishermen caste is *Banni* and *Goreya*. In addition to these, they also worship other gods and goddesses.

### Luk Devi

Luk Devi loiters by the riverside in the dead of night with *masal* or torch in her hand. Those

who had a chance to see her, have to bow down silently before her and not to disturb her. Before starting for a fishery fisherfolk worship her with red cloth, glass bangles, *akshat* or sun dired rice and sweets.

Other gods of fishermen caste are—Kewal Mull, Amar Singh and Kamala Mai. Kamala Mai may either be identified with the spirit of river *Kamala* or with Lakshmi, who resides in water. *Amar Singh* and *Kewal Mull* are deified heroes. A he-goat is sacrificed to them and they are offered *ganja* or hemp leaves. A she-kid is sacrificed to Kamala Mai. Fisherfolk also worship *Budhiya masan* or old hag of cremation ground. To please her ear-rings of palm leaves and spangles and yellow thread are offered.

### Panch Piriya

The family god of Dusadh, an untochable caste among the Hindus, is *Panch Piriya* or five mounds relating to Kali, Banni, Goreya, Tripul or Tirpul and Kewar. Kewar is said to be a deified Kshatriya prince. In some families Tripul is replaced by Hanuman. Tirpul or Tripul may be identified with Tripura Sundari of the Tantras. At some places Panch Piriya is regarded as five deified Muslim Pirs or saint, names of whom differ from mouth to mouth. It may be presumed that the idea of the worship of five Pirs is derived from Panch Piriya of Hindus. Panch Piriya is generally worshipped by untouchable Hindus such as Dusadh, Chamar, Dom, Methor, Dhobi, etc.

### Mira

In South-east Champaran, Dusadh families worship *Mira* as their family god. The worshipper furnished an interesting account of it. A clay mound represents *Mira*, which incorporates ten Muslim *dewans* (priests). In *Ashwin Navaratra*, ten pairs of bread are offered to *Mira* and later on they are consumed as *prasad* by the family members. Services of a *dewan* (Muslim priest) is requisitioned who reads *Namaz* or prayer to Allah. Two young fowls are brought and they are adorned with collyrium and vermillion. Fowls are taken out of the house accompanied by drummers. They are set free in a field. Then they are caught and taken away by a Muslim. This family does not take pork as is done by other Dusadhs. It may be noted that pork is a taboo to Muslims. The worship of *Goreya* is performed by with balls of millet and here no pig is sacrificed.

The question arises whether taking out fowl duly adorned and accompanied with drum as is done after marriage and subsequently taking away of those fowl by a Muslim symbolises the system of *dola* according to which a Hindu was compelled to give his daughter in marriage to a Muslim ruler.

### Rah

The worship of *Rah* (*Rahn*) is performed by Dusadhs. When the date fixed for the worship of *Rah* draws near a *aghwar* or deity room is made. By the side of it two bamboo poles are erected and between them two swords are tied in parallelly with their edges upwards. A *bhagata* caste stands on



those swords and worship is performed by offerings of *Khira*. The sacrificial fire is produced by rubbing of two bamboo sticks. A trench is dug and filled with live cinders. The *bhagata* treads on it which is followed by other devotees. Before doing so they wash their feet. It is said that by god's grace, cinders do not harm them.

The other god of Dusadh worth mentioning is *Sales*. Grierson has furnished a long list of godlings which are worshipped by low caste Hindus and untouchables. It is not considered desirable to reproduce that for lack of space.

### Goddess of Disease

On the outbreak of small-pox, its presiding deity *Sitala* or *Mai*, is to be worshipped. Women-folk bathe and go from village to village singing songs propitiating *devi* and begging. Articles of worship are purchased from the proceeds of begging. Similar worship is performed when cholera subsides in a village.

*Chudari* is a spirit of a Brahman widow who used to take meat and fish after death of her husband which was a taboo to her. To get rid from Malaria an offering of bread or millet (*marua*) and cooked tinny fish was made to her in a bamboo clump or grove where she was supposed to haunt. Similarly *Khokh Mai* was offered drenched rice and molasses to free a child from attack of cough. Now the use of quinine and calcium syrups has driven these malevolent godlings into oblivion. To make a rickety child fat, mustard oil is put on the gigantic black statue of Lord Buddha at Nalanda which is known as *Telia Baba*.

### Ancestor Worship

On the occasion of *Janeo* (initiation) and marriage ceremony the worships of ancestors are performed in form of *matrī-puja* when oblation of *ghee* is made in fire and *urad*, pulse, sesame and sundried rice are offered.

### Worship of earth mother

A farmer while sowing seeds or planting seedling in the field for the first time in the year, worships earth-mother with *askhat* or sundried rice, molasses, curd and flowers.

### Goddess of vegetation and corn

The goddess of vegetation is known as *Banasapati Mai*. She gives shelter to such a travellers who need to stay at night in the forest. She also points the night-way to a traveller who loses it. She is said to roam in disguise of an old woman. *Banasapati Devi*, in the forest of Narakatia in Don valley in Champaran, is offered pebbles by the passers-by. But *Annapura*, the goddess of corn, is neither worshipped nor any offering is made to her.

### Tree-Cult

It is a common belief since primitive time that a tree has a spirit or soul or it may be possessed by a godling, spirit or ghost as its abode. Pipal (*Ficus religiosa*) is supposed to be an abode of Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva and other gods and hence it is regarded as sacred. A pitcher with water is hung in a branch of it to be used by ghost of a departed person who hunts it for the first eleven days after

death. On *Mouni Amavasya*, a Pipal tree is worshipped by wrapping threads for 108 times around its trunk. Similarly, Vat (*Ficus indica*) is worshipped on *Vat Savitri-day*. In the month of *Kartik*, womenfolk light earthen lamps under the plant of *Tulasi* or holy basil. The worship of these trees has a sanction of the Puranas.

### River-Worship

Rivers of Bihar such as the Ganga, the Sarayu, the Gandak, the Bagmati, the Kamala, the Koshi etc. are regarded as sacred. People take bath in them and drop a few paise in their bottom. Barren women worship them to get child and they offer rice-balls, yellow cloth, and she-kid to them, singing ballads in their praise. They also light earthen lamps on their banks. People propitiate turbulent rivers like the Koshi to get a protection from the ravages of floods. Boatmen and traders on long journey by water route also worship the river as they start on their journey.

### Khwaja-Khijir

*Khwaja Khijir* is regarded as presiding deity of water by Muslims. On the last Thursday in the month of Shrawan, a raft of the birch of plantain tree is made by them in which bread and raw maize fruit with a lighted earthen lamp are kept. A *dewan* offers prayer and it is floated in the river.

### Animal Worship

On the first day of the bright half of *Kartik* oxen and cows are bathed and adorned. Barly flour, turmeric paste with mustard oil and juice of

harbal plants are given them to eat. When an ox or cow is purchased and brought to the house, some water is poured on its right foot, and rice and *durbadal* put on it. If a buffalo is brought, it is only adorned with vermillion and not worshipped.

### Snake-Worship

Snake worship is performed on Nagapanchami day or the fifth day of the bright half of *Shrawan*. The figurines of a pair of snake are drawn with dung on walls on both sides of the door and *lava* (fried paddy) and milk are offered to them in a ploughed field. Womenfolk go from village to village begging by singing ballads propitiating the snake god, proceeds of which are utilized in its worship. Deified female victims of snake-bite are also worshipped. If the snake god is duly propitiated, there is no fear of harm from snake-bite.

### Grave-Worship

Graves or *dargas* of Muslim saints are generally worshipped by Mohamedans to have a success in love affairs, or a litigation, or to get a child, or to be cured from a long illness. They offer *malid* or thick bread and cooked fowl and the wreath of flowers to it. Similarly *samadhi* of the Hindu saints are also worshipped by the votaries and devotees.

### Fetish-Worship

Fetish means an inanimate object which is believed to be inhabited by a spirit. Fetish worship is generally found among members of the trading community, artisans and professional classes and they worship implements and articles used

by them to earn their livelihood. Kayastha or writer caste worship pen and inkpot on the occasion of *Chitra Gupta puja* on the second day of the bright half of *Kartik*. The anvil and fire pot are worshipped by blacksmiths and goldsmiths respectively. Similarly a new net is worshipped by a fisherman. Rajputs worship sword on *Vijaya Dasami*-day. Agricultural implements are worshipped by farmers and weights and measures by grocers on the next day of Diwali or festival of light. Washermen worship tubs and planks used in washing clothes on full-moon day of *Shrawan* when a she-kid is sacrificed, arecanut, dove cardamom and flowers are offered. It is a community worship the cost for which is met by subscription from those who wash cloth at a particular *ghat* or bank of a river or pond and *prasad* is shared by all.

In this short article an attempt has been made to throw some light on the folk-gods and goddesses of Bihar. There is no hesitation to say that it is a sketchy outline for further research.

# The State of Maithili Literature Today

By

**Subhash Chandra Sarkar**

There are 4,983,000 Maithili speaking people in Bihar, according to the 1961 census. Of them 3,082,000 were in Darbhanga and 1,136,000 in Saharsa. The two other districts which showed a sizeable Maithili-speaking population were Muza-farpur (355,000 Maithili-speaking persons) and Purnea (315,000 Maithili-speaking persons). Put differently 69.85 per cent of the people of Darbhanga and 65.93 per cent of the people of Saharsa were Maithili-speaking.

The Maithili-speaking people thus constituted over ten per cent of the population of Bihar in 1961. Despite this large population the state of contemporary Maithili literature and Maithili journalism is extremely weak for lack of readership support. The total circulation of Maithili periodicals in Bihar in 1968 was 2,574 only. There were two Maithili newspapers published from Calcutta with a combined circulation of 1,981 copies. In other words, the combined circulation of all the Maithili newspapers in India was only 3,655 copies. If we take into consideration every other type of newspapers, even then the circulation may not exceed 5,000 copies. They could suffice for only about one thousandth of the Maithili-speaking population in Bihar.

This shows that the Maithili language is not being used by the people speaking the language for the purpose of serious communication. I do not know the reason. But the fact is that without a written literature a language cannot grow. I am tempted to quote from the autobiography of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan who visited this country recently. He writes, "Our province (i.e. North West Frontier Province) could not boast of even one national newspaper. Therefore I planned to publish a journal in the true sense of the work. I had to put in a great deal of hard work, but finally, in May 1928, my efforts bore fruit, and the first issue of the *Pakhtun* appeared. At that time the Pakhtuns did not have much feeling or love for their own language. In fact they hardly knew that Pashtu was their national language. A nation is known and recognized by its language and without a language of its own a nation cannot really be called a nation. A nation that forgets its own language will eventually disappear from the map altogether. It is a great pity that the Pakhtuns were so careless that wherever they settled they learnt to speak the local language and gave up speaking in their own language, instead they adopted the language of such place, where they used to reside. They were not even interested in reading or writing their own language. Leaving alone illiterate people, when I asked the educated Pakhtuns to subscribe to a Pashtu newspaper, their own newspaper in their own language after all, they said, has anything worthwhile ever been written in Pashtu? I replied

if it has not, surely that is not the fault of the Pashtu language ! Look at any other language in the world and you will see that it has grown and developed from the level of their own language. No language has ever dropped ready-made from the sky. But in other countries there were people who cherished their language, who worked for its development and enrichment. A language does not develop by magic, though our English-educated scholars seem to think so. (See *Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan: My Life and Struggle*, New Delhi, 1968 Pp 88-89).

The case with Maithili is just the oppsite of Pashtu. Quite early in history Maithili had a literature which was the object of envy of other people so much so that they began to claim the literature in Maithili -particularly Vidyayati's writings to be part of their own literature. Yet, alas! Maithili has long been dethroned from that glorious position. The primary reason for this fall has been the absence of writers in Maithili. I have heard serious scholars of Maithili say that after Vidyapati, Yatri, who received the Sahitya Akademi Award last year was the most important writer in Maithili. In other words, for five hundred years the language had been neglected by the people whose mother tongue it is. It is also significant that the moment Yatri, who has already earned great fame as a writer in Hindi under the pen name 'Nagarjun', turned to Maithili, a first class literature was created. This year Upendranath Jha "Vyas" has received the Sahitya Akademi award for his work



in Maithili. The lesson is self-evident. If the development of Maithili literature is desired, more and more of the educated and intellectually able Maithilis must turn to writing in Maithili.

### **Low Literacy retards readership growth**

It is equally clear that unless there is a readership in Maithili, the literature in that language cannot grow. But readership requires literacy. The literacy of the people of Bihar aged five or more in 1961 was 21.75 per cent. In Darbhanga, Saharsa and Purnea the rate of literacy was lower than the State average. In Darbhanga it was 19.76, Purnea 19.51 and in Saharsa 16.69. In other words the vast bulk of the people in the Maithili-speaking districts were illiterate. They could not be expected to sustain any literature. Out of 19,750, 570 males aged 5 or more in 1961 in Bihar, 6,950,967 males or 35.19 per cent were literate. Even in this case also the average of these three districts were lower than the State average. Darbhanga had 33.60 per cent male literacy, Purnea 30.45 per cent and Saharsa 27.64 per cent. Female literacy in Bihar in 1961 was 8.17 per cent; in other words out of 19,547,005 females in Bihar aged 5 or more in that year, only 1,596,878 females were literate. The female literacy rate was less than one-fourth of the male literacy rate in Bihar taken as a whole. However in the Maithili-speaking districts it was lower still. In Darbhanga it was only 6.81 per cent, Purnea 7.29 per cent and Saharsa 4.94 per cent.

If this was the situation in 1961 what was the hope in that year of this imbalance in literacy being rectified in the coming years ? The answer is, pretty little—unless, and here is some scope for human effort—deliberate efforts—were made to spread literacy and higher education. In 1961 only 21.41 per cent of the children of the age-group 5-14 in Darbhanga were in primary schools ; the proportion for Purnea was 25.38 per cent and Saharsa 23.62 per cent—in all three cases below the State average of 25.47 per cent. Here again there was a great disproportion between boys and girls. While 33.99 per cent of boys were in such schools in Darbhanga, 34.08 per cent in Purnea and 35.87 per cent in Saharsa (in all cases less than the State average of 37.25 per cent), only 9.74 per cent girls in Darbhanga, 9.65 per cent in Saharsa and 13.23 per cent in Purnea were in schools (the first two districts were well below the State average of 12.43 per cent). The same backwardness was to be noticed in the case of post-primary enrolment of population of age-group 15-29. Darbhanga with 8.21 per cent, Saharsa with 6.30 per cent and Purnea with 5.05 per cent were well below the State average of 8.87 per cent. For boys in this group Darbhanga 16.87 (higher than State average of 16.69), Saharsa 12.04 per cent and Purnea 9.09 per cent. For girls Darbhanga 0.85 per cent, Saharsa 0.57 per cent and Purnea 0.95 per cent (State average 1.52 per cent).

The discrimination against the women being educated is very pronounced among the Maithilis.

In other word, the task before the lovers of the Maithili literature is to see that the women are allowed to get a suitable education and join the mainstream of national effort. Without an extension of literacy among the Maithili-speaking people the Maithili literature cannot grow as fast as it should. Therefore a duty is cast on all of us to see that all barriers to the spread of education in the State are removed at the earliest opportunity. Democracy demands an educated citizen. Maithili literature also stipulates more education. Thus the development of Maithili literature is in keeping with the interest of the growth of democracy, the enrichment of Bihar, indeed of the whole of India. There is thus no scope for any conflict between the interest of Maithili and the national interest.

# The Santal Insurrection Through Ballads

By

R. M. Sarkar

The ballads are the constituent part which reflects the picture of the way of living of the people and, therefore, it is said to be the autobiography and the clear mirror of their day to day living. All the joys and sorrows, hopes and desires, beliefs and superstitions, fears and frustrations of the people's mind are to be felt in the oral traditional materials, the systematic study and analysis of which would present vast wealth of materials that are, in most of the time, not always available from the recorded sources. The folkloristic study of today is giving much stress on the importance of the oral traditional materials in understanding the life and living of a particular group. The folktales and folksongs and also other cultural traits are, no doubt, individual creation that are determined by cultural conditioning and thereby socially accepted, where the individual is greatly influenced by the preoccupations of his group as a whole. The folklore is a living cultural trait that flows in the stream of life through the ages. In order to study any memorable event in a particular human group or of a region one should get down in the stream of life to come in close contact with the particular oral art and thereby enter into the threshold of life of the people or of the region.

In our country there are numerous examples of the composition of ballads centering many local events. The Maratha Invasion, that took place some two hundred years ago on the eastern region of India affecting many villages in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, still pulsates in the way of life of the people. Besides these, other sensational events like that of the abolition of *Sati* in 1829, the Hindu Widow's Remarriage Act of 1856, the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 that gave instigation to the folk composers for composing ballads in these perspectives. Sometimes the remarkable happenings within the boundary of the village like the unchaste women, irregular marriages, illegal love affairs, activities of the misers and their ultimate fate etc. find place in the composition of ballads that are recited very often by the villagers.

The study of the Santal Insurrection is to be considered as essential in getting an overall idea on Bihar and her people as it is the root cause of the formation of a separate district—the Santal Pargana—under the Act 37 of 1855. The region in question played many important roles in the history of India. In the closing period of the sixteenth century the capital of Bengal was established at Rajmahal and also during the period from 1639 to 1660 it was again reached at the highest perfection. The earliest inhabitants of the present district of Santhal Pargana were the Maler Paharias when the greater part of the region was covered by dense forest. The immigration of the Santals from the different parts of the country was affected during

the later part of the 19th century into the region known as *Dam-in-i-koh* (skirts of the hills) which was formed in 1832-33 and distributed among Bhagalpur, Murshidabad and Birbhum districts. Ultimately the Santals established thereafter cleaning the jungle. The report of Dunber, the Collector of Bhagalpur, pointed out that in the year 1836 more than 427 Santal villages had been flourished in the *Dam-in-i-koh* region and later on it spread in the other Santal settlements in Dumka sub-division. The insurrection, then suddenly spread over a vast area extending from Bhagalpur to Birbhum and from Raniganj to Murshidabad. The causes of insurrection of the Santals, deeply rooted in changing atmosphere of the country, were manifold. The chief grievances of the Santals were the oppression and frauds committed on them by the non-tribals and other *Dikhu*, who had immigrated into the region for trade and money lending amongst the Santals. Over and above these, the exaction of the landlords, the negligence of the administrators, the corruption of the *amla* jointly added fuel to the fire of trouble. A conference of the Santals held at Bhagnadihi village near Barhait bazar on the 30th June, 1855, which was attended by nearly 10,000 people belonging to the Santal community. Two brothers of Bhagnadihi named Sidhu and Kanhu took the leading part and it had been announced that they got divine assistance in that connection. According to the direction of the two brothers letters had been forwarded to the Commissioner, Collector and Magistrate of Bhagalpur,

the Collector and Magistrate of Birbhum intimating the fact as regards the unbearable ill-treatment of the *Dikhu* and the up-country *mahajans* towards the Santals. But the Government did not like to interfere into the matter and, naturally, their earnest appeal became a cry in the wilderness. Finding no other alternative the Santals became insurgent, and then they, in a body, proceeded from Bhagnadihi to Panchketia bazar to worship a local goddess. Then the enraged Santals killed five local *mahajans* and also the *Daroga* or S. I. of the local Police Station. Just after this the Santal insurgents became furious and speedily attacked the rich *mahajans* living in Barhait bazar and from where they spread in the different lines with deadly weapons. The life of the people was at a stake and they began to run away here and there leaving their hearths and homes as the Santals started merciless killing, arson and loot in almost all the villages in *Dam-in-i-koh* and the neighbouring regions.

Those dreadful days passed away long long ago. But the tremulous memory of the days gone by still throbbing in the people's mind which are evidenced by the different types of folksongs, depicting the various phases and effects of the Santal insurrection, throughout the length and breadth of the affected region and the villages. The villages, that were hurt very much by the insurgents, are now to be found situated largely in the district of Santal Pargana in Bihar. Some are also to be met with in the district of Birbhum in West Bengal. As all these villages are influenced solely by the Bengali dialect, so the

“Baro sa Basattite uttarete utpat janmila  
Amir muluk theke Saontal jutila  
Betader ekan bara majhi dara  
je jek hanc chila

(In the 1262 B. S. a movement started in the north, the Santals came from the distant regions. Those people were united in a group under an able and strict leadership. The Santals belonging to two hundred and fifty villages assembled together.) The insurrection started in the Bengali year 1262, B. S. corresponding to 1855 A. D. when a large number of the Santals hailing from numerous villages were united to meet the challenge. The Santal insurgents planned to give a blow to the then British Empire. There are some ballads which depict the fact that the Santals wanted to root out the administrative control of the foreigners from the soil of India a little before the First Indian War of Independence of 1857 which the Britishers termed as 'Sepoy Mutiny'. The folk composer sings, depicting the events, thus—

Ingrej maricy amra rajya liba kere.”

(They decided amongst themselves with happy mood to exert their influence over the region and to



snatch the kingdom after driving out the Britishers). And for this reason,

“Panchpether paharey sab ekastha hailo  
saj saj dak saontal sekhan hotey dilo.”

(They assembled at the foot of the hill ranges of Panchketia and from there they gave a clarion call to all for preparing themselves).

After the dissolution of the assemblage at the foot of Panchketia hills the Santals sent messages to each and every household of the different villages as per their traditional custom of communicating message of importance by sending *sal* twigs.

“Korley hukum jari amader jati ore  
Dal ghuriye neotata dibe sabar ghare ghare.”

(The people of our community has passed the orders who extend their leadership after rotating the branches (of *Sal*) in the household of each and every Santal).

The above songs describe the assemblage and preparation of the Santals on the eve of the ensuing insurrection. Then there are songs which present a picture of actual happenings resulted due to the activities of the insurgents. The following songs depict the ill-fated condition of some of the villagers starting from Langulia (in Birbhum District) to Kumrabad and Sadipur (in Santal Pargana District). After the remarkable happenings at Bhagnadihi the insurgents spread at the different regions. One group of insurgents began to sack many places of importance and numerous villages. The town of Nagar and Langulia village had been plundered by them and they proceeded towards Kumrabad. The

**Dhuklo Banskuli Kulikuli bajiey nakara  
Bansra, Muluk, Talberer lok halo bhagora  
Banskuli kuli kuli bajaey nakara  
Ulangini kambasini hailyo bhagora”**

The plundering of the Santal insurgents became so fierce that not only the people of the villages but the gods and goddesses of the villages also took to their heels. Above four lines of the folk composer will present a clearer idea, in brief, about the merciless activities of the Santal insurgents. Here is another song :

Aji raksha nai bhai ki ache kapaley  
Takhan harshya menetakhan harashya  
mane, Saontalgane Rajbari sondaay  
Manush kata paila sedin kuri dui arahay  
Barey Saontalgan-Pare Saontalgan, hristha  
money dai tangite san  
Labjorey nara betake dila balidan  
Gela Kumaradadey-gela kumrabadey, sacal  
fade, hailo ekakar

Gharey agni diey betara kolley charkhar  
 Porailey dhaner gola—porailey dhaner gola  
 till, julya, sarisa adi jato  
 Garu, mahis, chagal, bhenra purila katasato  
 Purbey Hanuman—purbey Hanuman, Lak-  
 akhan, Jematey poray  
 Gharabari agni diye Saontal beray”

(The Santals have come with a view to commit murder ; there is no escape from this at the present moment. Then with cheerful mind the Santals entered *Rajbari* from plundering which resulted in the killing of forty to fifty individuals. After this the Santals began to sharpen their swords and the Nara of Lanjore village fell a victim to this. Then the Santals proceeded towards Lumrabad in a body and sacked the village by lighting fire which resulted in burning completely the store-houses of paddy, maize, mustard sheed etc. and also cows, buffaloes, goats and sheep were faced destruction in hundreds. The Santals kindled fire in such a large scale which reminds one the activities of Hanumana (the sacred monkey of the Ramayana fame in the destruction of *Lanka*).

Kumrabad village in the district of Santal Pargana received a fatal injury which we know from the description of beggars. It was a developed village with a large number of well-to-do families and many growig cottage industries. The inhabitants of that village were killed by the Santal insurgents like anything. The ballad goes like thus—

“Ghar bari kuri kuri bhangley dalan kotha  
 Kumrabader lokguloke korley kumrokat a\*”

(All the houses including masonry buildings were destructed on a large scale and the people of Kumrbad were cut down like the cutting of gouards).

“Lutley Rampur, Kathikur ar Bedenarayanpur  
Pahar rajar mati lutli kato dur

Parerpurer ghare ghare katilo bistor

Bhandibaner gopal thakur mane peyechendar”

(The villages of Rampur, Kathipur and Bedenarayanpur were sacked and the plundrings were also made within the jurisdiction of the Zamindar of Paha. The inhabitants of Periharpur were killed in large numbers. On seeing this the Lord Gopal of Bhandirban became panic stricken).

All the above villages, except the last one, situated within the jurisdiction of Santal Pargana district, were largely affected by the merciless attacks of the Santal insurgents. Periharpur village witnessed large scale plundering, murder, arson and at that time the village in question was destroyed within a day. The wave of destruction also reached at the neighbouring villages Bhandirban and the people became afraid of their life and property to such an extent that even the famous village god Gopal got anxious for staying there.

On learning about the awful attack of the Santals on the innocent people, the then Government of the country realised the need of bringing the affected areas under efficacious administrative control. The Government then appointed a Special Commission for the suppress of the insurrection. But the situation went out of control. Nearly thirty villages

“Saheb hukum dila-saheb hukum dila, bear  
 boley, sune sepigan  
 Hajare hajarey Santals marey tatakhhan  
 Amni bhagora hoye-amni bhagora hoye  
 purba muye, palaye jaay  
 Patjore mokame asi nagara bajaay”.\*

The above songs depict the three different stages of the movement of the Santals—the formative stage, the accelerative stage and the retreating stage. The folk composers have left no stone unturned to record the different phases of that immemorable event and, in most of the time, the pictures drawn by them have been able to serve the purpose of depicting the whole incident before the people of to-day. Though

<sup>1</sup> These two songs have been taken from a long ballad composed by Rai Krishnadas of Kulkuri Village in the year of the outbreak of the insurrection. It was published in the History of Birbhum (in Bengali) by Gourihari Mitra.

there are no scholastic touch in these and also those are not oriented with thought-provoking materials, yet, in all the circumstances, these ballads should be given priority at the time of analysing the life activities of the people of the region under study. It has been seen from the above study that the ballads, within the limited boundary of four or five lines, have done much in presenting the clear ideas on the different conditions of the people due to the insurrection without going into any serious discussion. Here lies the credit of the ballads. The ballads on the Santal Insurrection, therefore, should be regarded as indispensable in studying the land and people of Bihar as these are connected with the formation of the District of Santal Parganas—the most important district in Bihar State for several reasons.\*

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The contributor is indebted to Sri Ajit Kumar Mitra of Gobindpu Village, Birbhum, for the songs collected by him from the affected regions in Santal Pargana and Birbhum Districts, used in this article.

# The declining folklore of Bihar

By

P. C. Roy Choudhury

Bihar is one of the States of India whose ancient history is available to a large extent. It is unfortunate that researches in ancient history have generally been confined to the succession of monarchs, political shifts and not much notice has been given of the common people, their culture and traditions. Folklore is quite a reliable index to earlier traditions and culture of the people. The easy mobility of the folklore is remarkable and same folk-stories, songs, riddles and proverbs are found in different parts of India with a little bit of local alteration. This shows that there was an inter-change of ideas and through pilgrimages, *melas* (fairs) etc. people used to carry tales while on their move. This integration is remarkable in an age when communications were rare.

There is a common pattern in folk-literature which does not know any geographical limit. This has been interpreted as evidence of nature-myths by Max-Muller. But other scholars have different views and approaches to folklore. L. Gomme thought that study of folklore could better be done by a historical approach. Frazer is more homely and gives a commonsense approach. To him primitive and popular folk-literature is mutually inter-dependent and explanatory. In recent years Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown found in folklore a vital element in a living culture.

Since Bihar is traditionally a hoary tract and had reached the pinnacle in culture, the folk-literature of Bihar should also be a very interesting study. *Panchatantra* has its origin in Bihar. Not only the folk-literature of Bihar but the same of the other parts in India are also well-known. T. Benfy in 1859 had held that most of the fairy-tales of Europe had of Indian origin. It is a pity that there has not been an adequate study of the folklore in Bihar. In 1949 Messrs Funk and Wagnalls and Company of New York have published two big volumes of Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend. It is very unfortunate that India does not find an adequate mention in these two volumes. The fault is not with the compilers but is with us. The source materials from India are rather inadequate and that is why very few of our folk materials have found their mention. We have not studied much of the beautiful motifs of our folktales and many other details of folklore.

It is also unfortunate that folklore has not yet been properly utilised by our social anthropologists. Social anthropology is a new branch of knowledge. While the anthropologists in India have made and are making sustained study of the changes in the villages, culture-complex and particularly those in the tribal areas, very few of them have devoted their time to the study of folklore. To give a very simple example there has not been practically a systematic and academic study of the place names in any part of India. Usually it will be found that place names have beautiful origin or motifs. The



anthropologists could have drawn excellent source materials for a study of the culture-complex particularly of the primitive people if they had tried to compile the tribal-tales and analyse their background. Most of the folktales are permeated with social and religious customs and as such they could have been excellent source materials.

There has not, again, been much serious efforts to collect folklore of the different regions. The folklore of North and South Bihar has practically gone by default. We have now a generation of grandmothers in North and South Bihar not confined merely to the urban areas who do not know the old folk-stories which used to keep enthralled the children fifty years back. The itinerant story-teller who would visit the villages occasionally has now become almost a relic of the past.

The Christian missionaries has pioneered in collecting the folklore of Chhotanagpur and Santal Parganas. The earlier missionaries had penetrated into the very interior of the tribal areas and in the midst of their multifarious work they found ample time to collect such stories. Rev. P. O. Bodding was a collector of a number of folk-stories of the Santal Parganas. The Norwegian Mission of Oslo had published three volumes on the Santal Folk Tales collected by Rev. Bodding. Bodding was not merely a collector of folk-stories, but he had also analysed folklore and its association with medicines. The Asiatic Society of Bengal had published his "Studies in Santal Medicines and connected Folklore" in 1925. Father Hahn had collected some of

the folk-stories of the Oraons, another tribal community of Chhotanagpur. Father A. Grignard had published a revised edition of Father Hahn's folk stories in 1935. Shri Sukumar Halder, a member of the Bihar Civil Service and a prolific writer had published a few articles on the folklore of the Hos, another aboriginal tribe of Bihar. He had also collected a few riddles prevalent among the Hos. Shri S. C. Roy of Ranchi, that indefatigable pioneer of social anthropology in India, although a lawyer by profession, had given some references to the folklore of the tribals he had studied. Roy's canvas was so large that he could not get much space for this particular aspect. Some of the old folk-stories of the Asuras, another ancient and disappearing tribal community of tribal Bihar, have also been collected. But for this great pioneer work much of the folk-stories of these tribal people might have been lost to-day. S. C. Mitra was another distinguished scholar who cultivated much folk-lore of South Bihar.

But there was no Bodding or Hahn in South as in North Bihar. This has given rise to an anomaly. While some of the folk-stories of the declining tribals have been preserved, most of the folk-stories of the more advanced communities in North and South Bihar are rapidly getting lost. O'Malley in some of his earlier District Gazetteers had mentioned of a few folk stories while describing some places but he did not go into any detail.

The disappearance of the folk-stories will be a definite loss for the State. There has been attempt to collect fastly dying the folk-stories in

other parts of India too. The 'Folk Tales of Bengal' by Rev. Lal Behari Day in English and by Dakshinaranjan Mitra-Mazumder in Bengali, 'Folk-Tales of Mahakoshal' by Verrier Elwin, 'Folk Tales of Orissa' by Kunja Behari Das, 'Folk-Tales of Assam' by J. Barooah had preserved some of the beautiful folk-stories. Dinesh Chandra Sen's book 'Folk Literature of Bengal' (1920) with an excellent foreword by W. R. Gurlay is a classic. But Gurlay thought that the monkey, the elephant, the fighting ram at the pictures of the Barahut and the carvings have not changed and the environment will remain the same. Gurlay could not foresee the events in the book of the Jataka stories edited by Francis and Thomas. The rapid phenomenal changes that have started in Bihar and in other parts of India have had their great impact on the rural life changing even the food habits, modes of dress, ornaments, customs and manners. The economic struggles for existence have become much more keen. Politics has entered into even the primary schools and the few persons whether young or old who meet under a shady tree in a village talk more of politics and of the cinemas than of folk-tale. Under such circumstances there is no wonder that Bihar which had given *Panchatantra* to the world would forget her folk-stories.

Apart from the folk-stories, we have got beautiful sets of riddles and proverbs in Bihar which show deep insight into human mind, a familiarity with the elements of nature and the basic problems of life. These riddles and proverbs are also getting quickly lost. Along with them are declining

the folk-songs, *bratas*, *aripans* and paintings. To give an example, the old Maithil ladies in Darbhanga district even now can produce exquisite *aripans* which would put the artists of Visva-Bharati into embarrassment. But the younger generation of Maithil girls is not being brought up in the tradition of *aripans*. The beautiful traditional songs associated with seasons or with particular occasions, like marriage, child-birth, or *sad* are still there but more confined to the rural areas. These *loka-geets* are there in every districts of Bihar and in the different dialects of Hindi. They require to be preserved for their beautiful words and imagery if not for anything else. If we cannot keep up the creation of new folklore, the least that we can do is to preserve, what we have.

It will be interesting to give some idea of a few particular items of folklore. In a paper read in the Ethnology and Folklore Section of the Second Oriental Conference held at Calcutta in 1922, Shri Manindra Bhusan Bhaduri discussed about the Astronomy of the Mundas and their associated Star myths. Shri Bhaduri had shown how the Mundas interpret the Orion. The quotation that follows will explain :—"The sword and belt of the Orion, they imagined, from their appropriate likeness to the plough and ploughshare (*Har Jueit*), which their Sing Bonga (god) first shaped in the heavens and taught people on earth, the uses of it. They say that the Sing Bonga was making the plough and ploughshare with a chisel and hammer and when he had just finished it, he observed a

*Panrki* (dove) hatching on its eggs at a little distance ; and desiring to bag the same, threw the hammer at it ; but he missed his mark and the hammer went over the *Panrki's* head and hung on a tree, where it is seen to this day. The hammer of the Sing Bonga is their *moagaru-ipil* (lit. harmer-star) which corresponds to the pleiades which resembles somewhat a cudgel or hammer (*moogaru*). The Aldebaran is their *Panrki* and the other stars of the Hyades are the eggs of the *Panrki*. It is curious to note that even a Munda boy will unmistakably point out these star-groups.

Among the Mundas the *Panrki-ipil* is associated with the approach of the wet season. Being close observer of nature by necessity, they also ascertain the advent of the months and seasons by observations of other natural phenomena. So when *Botrong* (Hind. *Kari*) ripens, it is *Jeta-candu* (lit. hottest month) and the wet season is near at hand. The end of *Jeta-candu* is signified by the blossoming of the *Jilhur* tree and the frequency of dust storms and the smoky appearance of the atmosphere, when they say that *Rohin* (meaning *Aldebaran*) has come and all early sowing of paddy must be completed. The *Rohin* is evidently a corruption of the Hindu "*Rohini*" and has been borrowed from them."

Shri Bhaduri also shows what was the reaction of the Mundas to the Capella and the Great Bear. Regarding the Great Bear which the Mundas call it the *Parkom-kunru-ipil* (lit. Bedstead-thief-star). Shri Bhaduri mentions :—"According to the Mundas their Sing Bonga retired to rest at night in the north

of the heavens and slept on a bedstead (*Parkom*). The legs of this *parkom* are the four stars of the Great Bear forming a quadrilateral the  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ ,  $\gamma$ ,  $\delta$  of the *Ursa Majoris*. While the Sing Bonga was asleep, three thieves (*Kumru*) came to steal the *parkom* and one of the thieves actually caught hold of one of its legs and pulled and displaced it. [ The displaced position of the star  $\delta$  U. Maj. is explained in this way. ]

Meanwhile the guard of the Sing Bonga (the Alcor near the  $\zeta$  U. Maj. which is visible with difficulty) who was in hiding and unseen by the thieves, suddenly raised a hue and cry and the thieves ran away. The curving stars (Epsilon, Zeta and Eta) are the three thieves shown as running away.<sup>2</sup>

"The next prominent figure familiar to the Mundas is the Milky way. They call the famous galaxy by the name of *Gai Hora*, i. e. the path of the cows. Their Sing Bonga is said to lead his cows everyday along this path and the nebulous appearance of the path is due to the dust raised by the herd of cattle, marching along the path.

"According to the Mundas, who divide the year into three seasons, the *Jete sa* (lit the hot weather), the *Jargi da* (the rainy season), and the *Rabang sa* (the cold season), the *Gai Hora* is said to reign during the period of *Jargi da* and the dust raised by the cows is said to send down rains on earth. The other two monitors of the two seasons, *Rabang sa* and *Jeta sa* are the *Harjuait-ipil* and the *Parkom-kuru-ipil*, respectively.

"The other stars known to the Mundas, so far as I have been able to ascertain till now, are the *Ango-*

*ipil* and the *Kumru-har-ipil*, which is also called the 'Burka'. The latter is the Venus. The word 'Burka' is probably a corruption of the Hindi word 'Bhrgu' which is a synonym for *Sukra* or Venus."

Some of the folktales still current in North and South Bihar recall past history and tradition. The story of Raja Nigas which is intimately associated with the famous Kakolat water fall in Gaya district is an instance. People bathe in their thousands at this waterfall on *Chaitsankranti*-day and recall the story. This story also recalls the great hold of snake worship of Bihar. The folk-story of Hazrat Jandaha, a great Muslim saint of Muzaffarpur district, has given rise to the name of a village in Hajipur subdivision. The temple of Damodarji in Muzaffarpur district has also a folk-story behind it which is again associated with the great saint Tribhuvan Sain Lal Das of Jainpur in that district. Among the other places which have folklore associated with the place names Lath, a village are in Jehanabad district and Nonachar in Champaran district. The story of Nonachar shows that the Dusadh, now a Scheduled Caste Community was once a powerful and a ruling community. The folk-story of Allaha and Rudal has spread to different parts of Northern India. This story is associated with Bawangarhi village in Champaran district. The famous Rohtas in Shahabad district recalls the folk-story of Harish Chandra and his son Rohitaswa. Champanagar in Bhagalpur city is intimately connected with the great story of Behula and Lakhindar. It is not necessary to multiply instances. What is necessary is to collect and preserve folk-stories.

# Pattern of Tribal Culture in Bihar

By

**L. P. Vidyarthi**

The tribal zone of Bihar which is geologically one continuous unit of Chotanagpur and the Rajmahal Plateau, covers the administrative districts of Ranchi, Hazaribagh, Palamau, Manbhum, Singhbhum and the Santhal Parganas. Roughly, these districts are inhabited by about four million of tribal people which approximately constitute 30 per cent of the total population of this area. In some of these districts, namely Ranchi (60 per cent), Santhal Parganas (44.66 per cent) and Hazaribagh (36 per cent)', the tribal population is exceptionally dense. Taken on the State level according to the Census of 1961 the percentage of tribal population in Bihar comes to 10.1 per cent. The 1951 Census report enumerate fortyfive tribes of various sizes that inhabit these districts of Bihar. According to the Constitution of India twenty-nine tribes have been listed as "Scheduled Tribes". Some of the important tribes are the Santhal (15,534,646), the Oraon (638,490), the Munda (519,743), the Ho (349,645), the Bhumij (152,992), the Kharia (88,777), the Saoria Paharia (68,654), the Birhor (2,499) and the Asur (4,388).

## **Race : Language and History**

Very little physical anthropology has been done in the area, but on the basis of present evidence the



tribes may be considered to be homogeneous racially. All of them have been classified as "Proto-Australoid". In general, they are of black complexion, curly hair, flat nose, and short to medium stature. Almost all these tribes are distinctive linguistically. Grierson classified the languages in the area into two categories : Austric, (locally called Mundari) and Dravidian. Most of the tribal languages show their affinity to the Munda group while only Kurukh of the Oraon, and Malto of the Saoria Paharia and Maler are said to be related to the Dravidian family of language.

On the basis of their linguistic affiliation and oral traditional material, S. C. Roy (1915) suggests historical connections between all the Mundari-speaking people that came to Chhotanagpur from Northern India after the Aryan invasion. On the other hand, Roy indicates that Dravidian-speaking tribes such as the Oraon and the Saoria came originally from the South possibly from the Narmada Valley, and in course of successive migrations settled down in Chhotanagpur and Santal Parganas.

### **Culture-Types**

A general ethnographic study of these tribes suggests that during the course of about last thousand years or so these tribes have become economically specialised and have adapted different geographical environments. Because of this differentiation, their linguistic and historical connections got relatively insignificant in their life. For example, in terms of historical and linguistic connections, the Birhors are related to the Munda group but owing to their respective ecological specialisation they are far apart.

The Mundas live in villages, practise plough cultivation, and have an elaborate ritual and social system, while on the contrary, the Birhor, traditionally speaking, wander in small migratory groups from forest to forest in quest of game. Similarly, the Saoria Paharia, though historically related to the Oraon group (a plains tribe like the Mundas), are more similar to the Hill Kharia (a hill tribe branch of the plains tribe—the Kharia of the Munda group) in respect to economic adaptation and socio-cultural adjustments. Both the groups practise slash-and-burn agriculture, live in small villages, possess poor technological implements and household belongings, and are at a low level of socio-cultural integration. These cross-cultural regularities or parallels among these two tribes and other-tribes mentioned above can be explained in part, at least, through cultural ecology or environmental factors. With these considerations we can classify the tribes of Bihar into four culture-types :

1. Forest-Hunting Type ;
2. Hill-Cultivation Type ;
3. Plains-Agriculture Type ;
4. Simple Artisan Type.

The terms used for classification indicate roughly the geographical environment as well as the economic occupation of each type. With each type goes a particular type of settlement pattern and socio-cultural integration that are discussed in the following pages. At this point the reader is cautioned that this discussion will stress the importance of understanding the process of adaptation to an ecolog-

ical environment in the study of cultures, especially of the little known communities, and in no way should the following exposition be considered within a framework of environmental or economic determinism. With this brief clarification, an outline of the above four culture-types have been presented under with a little more discussion of the second type in addition to what have already been said in another article by the same contributor in this book.

### **1. Forest-Hunting Type**

This type is illustrated by the Birhor and the Korwa who are essentially in the "stage" of hunting and food collecting and live in small bands known as Tanda. Birhor come from patrilineal family that wander from forest to forest in quest of game and raw materials for rope. Their important and non-migratory games include monkeys, rabbits, squirrels and wild-goats; and their chief appliances for hunting include nets, club and axes. Since monkey and rabbit hunts require more co-operative personnel than a nuclear family can provide, the migratory band of the Birhor includes in it all the sons of the father. In case this patrilineal extended family is still too small, it joins the temporary encampments of friendly or related families. In this way two or three families may combine together for collective hunting. They also name a hunt leader and usually hunt as a unit, but for certain tasks, such as the collection of storing for rope-making each individual works independently. Birhor women also like to be quiet and alone while collecting *Mahua*-flowers,

wild-fruits and vegetables that are available on the outskirts of the forests.

Each patrilineal family has its own religious shrine consisting of a small clay pitcher and a twig of *Sal*-tree. It is always located to the rear of the hut of the eldest member of the family. When they migrate, the eldest member carries the shrine, known as Bonga Kumba, with great solemnity and piety. In addition to Bonga Kumba the Birhor family worships a number of forest spirits and wild animals, such as the tiger, bear, or the leader of monkey, Hanuman. All their religious ceremonies are observed at the family level. A section of the nomadic Birhor has been settled at Bishnupur in the district of Ranchi and gradually it is taken up agricultural and settled style of life.

## 2. The Hill-Cultivation Type

This category consists of three important tribes - the Saoria Paharia, the Hill Kharia and the Asur - along with many other minor tribes like Mal Paharias. These tribes live in the hills of three different areas and have developed from three different historical background, as noted earlier. However, from ecological point of view they are quite similar and may be classified together.

The Hill Kharia live in the hills of Singhbhum district. They are considered to be a specialized group of the Plain Kharia who practise plough cultivation and live in organised villages. Large section of Hill Kharia practise slash-and-burn agriculture on the pattern of Saoria Paharia's to

be described later on. They live in group of five to twenty families.

The Asur, though of the same level of socio-cultural integration as the Hill Kharia and the Saoria Paharia, now participate in the same type of economic activities, but traditionally they were iron-smelters. They enjoyed a virtual monopoly in supplying iron to the tribal population of Chhotanagpur. They could get iron from ore of the hills on which they lived, wood for charcoal from the forest around them, and they developed simple techniques for smelting. But during the last sixty years, because of several social, economic, and administrative changes, they have had to abandon their ancient profession. The decline of iron smelting among them and the consequent disturbances in their economic base brought about a maladjustment with the environment. They had no alternative but to take up hunting, food-gathering and fishing; eventually they developed techniques of simple cultivation.

The Asurs live in small impoverished villages; they no longer observe rituals and festivals on an elaborate scale. They are always on the verge of starvation and their number is decreasing very fast.

**The Maler or Saoria :** The Saoria Paharia live in the hill-tops of Rajmahal plateau in the subdivisions of Rajmahal, Pakur and Godda of the Santhal Parganas district. Most of the villages are situated from 1,500' to 2,000' above sea level, but above the neighbouring plains area, their height ranges only 300' to 700'. In Barhait Bunglow,

however, a number of Saoria villages are located in the foot-hills zone. In general, the plains like depressions between hills in this zone are inhabited by the Santhal, an agricultural tribe, with whom the Saoria may be fruitfully contracted.

The villages of the Saoria Paharia are located on undulating hill-top cultivation or slash-and-burn type of cultivation around which their economy resolves, (locally they call this type of agriculture as Kuruwa).

The nature and technique of Kuruwa cultivation are much the same throughout the Saoria area. In the months of February and March a particular patch of forest is selected, and after brief rituals and sacrifices the forest is cut and the trees and plants are left to dry. Before the advent of the first monsoon shower, in May and June, the dry wood is brunt to ashes. What remains is removed from the field and used as fuel. With the first shower a luxuriant growth of grasses develop in the field. The grasses are uprooted and left in the field providing a mantle of rich humus. Thus when the field is ready with a thick covering on the rocky sub-soil, the Saoria husband and wife, along with their grownup children, dig holes in the field using pointed sticks, and then they sow the seeds. The sowing period lasts for two months, July and August. After this period they stay there for day and night to protect the harvest from insects, destructive worms and other evil-doers. Saorias make a raised platform as well as a hut to stay in and save their lives from the attack of the wild animals,

especially from the bears. During this period half of the village population move out to Kuruwa field because they may be as far as five miles from village.

The harvest is ready in December and the Saoria sacrifices in the fields again ; this time in the name of the spirit of the field, and then he starts to reap the harvest. When he brings the corn to his village hut he again observes rituals and makes sacrifices in the name of the hearth and the hut. In all these offerings he himself officiates as a priest and the ceremonies are confined to the small nuclear family. This indicates that temporary migration to families take place even in a settled community like that of the Saoria where shifting cultivation is practised.

In general, a particular patch is cultivated twice, and thereafter it is allowed to lie fallow for atleast five years. Less fertile land is cultivated only once and is set aside for a longer period. Outside Bihar or in other States like Assam (Jhum cultivation), Madhya Pradesh (Podu cultivation) Orissa (Dahi cultivation), the hill tribes practise shifting cultivation on the same pattern, though they call it by different local names. In addition to Kuruwa for some months in the summer before the commencement of the rains, the Saoria men and women cut and collect wood from the forest to sell at the weekly market on the plain. Women and children also collect seasonal wild fruits and roots to supplement the diet. All types of foods are utilised including the flesh of dead cows. For this they are looked down upon by the neighbouring

Hinduised tribes. But in spite of this dietary supplement they barely manage to subsist.

Thus the struggle for existence is continuous. The environmental handicap is so immense and the technological appliances is so poor that they suffer a great deal and lead a life of misery, starvation, and ill-health. Anxiety over food and insecurity in life is reflected in their folklore, their games, dreams and in all forms of their social and cultural expressions.

### **3. Plain Agriculture Type**

The next type consists of tribes like the Santhal, the Munda, the Oraon, the Ho, and others that generally occupy the undulating areas on the plateau and are predominantly dependent upon cultivation. Hunting and fishing probably were important in the past but are now of only ceremonial significance. These people live in permanent villages which consist of about 50 to 100 household units and include a population varying from 100 to 500 each. All the tribes are patrilineal, patrilocal and practise clan as well as village exogamy. Each village is under two leaders, one secular and the other religious, whose offices are almost hereditary. Traditionally, in each tribe there is also a regional political authority to settle inter-village or inter-tribal disputes.

Religious and social functions are observed on village level, and for each village there is a dancing and meeting ground. Shrine, burial ground, and sleeping dormitories (The Santhal do not have sleeping dormitories) are there. The village is the important



social unit and normally marriage relations are fixed outside the village.

#### **4. Simple Artisan Type**

The fourth type includes a number of tribal artisans such as the Kurмали (10,902), the Lohra (46,855), the Mahali (60,385) and the Chikbaraik who are found scattered in the villages of agricultural tribes and serve the latter's requirements. The Kurмали and the Lohra are the traditional iron-smiths who provide the villagers with new implements and repair old ones. The Mahali are professional basket-makers and drummers, while the Chikbaraik are the traditional weavers of these tribal societies. From two to six families of these tribal artisans live in each agricultural village and for all practical purposes are integral part of the village. For their livelihood they depend upon the village market which is usually organised on a traditional barter system. They supplement their income by means of 'odd jobs', but owing to the impact of alien markets and the advent of money economy their professions have been adversely affected. They are now migrating either in tea gardens or to cities for employments, or to seek some sort of agricultural work in the villages.

#### **Changing Face of Tribal Bihar**

The face of tribal Bihar is fast changing. The colour of the canvas is traditional. Adivasi culture is undergoing transformation under the impact of modernism. After the advent of Independence

the Government have launched a large number of economic and educational schemes for ameliorating the so-called primitive ways of life of the Adivasis of Bihar. The economic programmes include reclamation of lands, minor irrigation work, loans for cottage industries, distribution of spinning wheels for Khadi work, opening of grain-golas, reservation of certain percentage of jobs, constructions of roads and so on. The educational schemes consist of opening of new schools, grants or stipend, opening of hostels and their management and payment of grants in aid to non-official instructors engaged in the work of tribal education. In addition to these economic and educational schemes, there are special welfare measures for the specific problems of the nomadic and hilly tribes, as for example, the settlement of the nomadic family of the Hill Kharia and the Birhor, and the special welfare scheme of the Paharia shifting cultivators.

### **Revitalisation Movement of Tribal Bihar**

The tribal Bihar is in a process of transition. Apart from the Government welfare measures a new leadership is emerging from the tribals themselves. A series of movements which have been variously called "nativistic" and "reformation" or "revitalization", characterise the modern political movements among the tribals of Bihar. These movements emerging out of contact situations are of multiple implications and need careful analysis by the students of Indian civilisation, politics, socio-cultural workers and administrators.

# Cultural Elements in Ho Songs

By

R. D. Munda

The study of the Ho folklore was undertaken in the village Shaliburu of Singhbhum in the year 1963. The contributor made an attempt to study the culture of the Ho as reflected in their folktales, folksongs, and riddles in a projected way. In the present paper, which is a part of a larger work, an attempt has been made to describe the culture of the Hos through in their songs. The reference of the songs related to a particular culture trait has been given in the parenthesis.

The Hos are the fourth major tribe of tribal Bihar, forming a population of nearly four lakhs. They inhabit in the Singhbhum District between 22°N-23°N and 86°-55°E-65°-22°E. They are chiefly concentrated in the Kolhan area which measures 1905 sq. miles. Singhbhum is Bihar's most densely forested area and is bounded by Saraikela and Kharasawan on the north, by Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Banai and Gegendpur on the south, by Dhalbhum and the Kharkai river in the east and by Gangpur and Porahat on the west. The rivers like the Marangara, the Raro, the Koel, the Karo, the Gumra, the Bhagirathi and the Sanjay add to the ruggedness of the country. The jungles are of great economic importance for the Hos which provide them with so many kinds of roots, fruits and games. They are also sources of various commercial goods. More

important than the wealth of jungles is its richness in minerals. India is proud of Singhbhum for its mineral wealth where almost all kinds of minerals are available. Kolhan, being in Singhbhum, is not an exception. Iron ore deposits are found at the Pansira Buru, the Buda Buru, Gua and Noamundi which support TISCO. There is a big cement factory at Jhikpani, twelve miles south of Chaibasa on the road to Jayant Garh. Some China clay mines are found in and around Karanjia. There is a great possibility of more mining centres in this areas so the surveys are going on.

The Hos affiliate themselves with the Mundas which seems to be true, when we take the people, their culture and language into consideration. They narrate the same story of Lutukum Haram and Lutukum Buria to be their earliest ancestors as we find the same among the Mundas. Again they share the same story as of Madra Munda and Phanimukut Roy, once the king of Chutia Nagpur, in a distorted manner. From the tales and songs it appears that they have migrated from Ranchi to Singhbhum via Porhat. Prior to their arrival in the Kolhan, the land was inhabited by the Bhuiyas and Sarawaks. It is unknown, however, as to how the original inhabitants used to call that area which is Kolhan after the Hos. The Kolhan which encompasses more than 900 villages, is divided into twentysix *peers* (*Peeri*-big open land) under 65 *mankis* who response to the Government. There is a Munda in each village who responses to the *manki*. Munda has a *kajua* who assists him in the village administration.

Now, the term 'Kolhan' has come into existence with the establishment of Hos in that area. In Sanskrit, 'Kola' means pig ; 'han' means the reduced form of 'sthan'. Thus we set Kolhan from Kolasthan (dwelling place of the pig-like people). It is evident from this as to how the tribes stood in the eyes of the Sanskrit speaking people, for no race would like to name itself after a pig—a very dirty creature. The term 'Kol' is applied not only to the tribes of Singhbhum, but also to almost all Austric speaking peoples plus some Dravidian speaking peoples of Chutiya Nagpur. The term Ho has been reduced from 'Horo' which means 'man', their language being 'Ho Jagar'—the language of man.

Referring to the physical qualities of the Hos D. N. Majumdar says—"Hos do not present a powerful appearance. They do not possess deep chests, broad shoulders and strong muscles, nor very sturdy physical features. They are usually of short stature, dark complexion with a short broad and flat nose. The eyes are small and dark, and hair wavy to curly ; beards and moustaches are practically absent while the chin is narrow and the lips are of medium size. Their ears are small and fairly developed. They possess powerful white teeth and seldom suffer from caries. In some cases, a slight pragmatism is noticeable, but slanting eyes are rare". More than ten years before Majumdar gave the above statement. Tickell was much impressed of the Hos who are 'manly and bearing their handsome physique.' It appears that the race of the Ho man is degenerating, for it is not true with

the woman. The woman possesses 'a fine physique, charming gait and an admirable deposition.' To Tickell, the Ho maiden reminds one of the Swiss peasant girls.

While discussing the race of the Hos we must take their language into consideration. The language of the Hos is 'Ho Jagar,' the 'language of man' as it is in the case of Mundas. It is a branch of Mundari group of language sub-family which itself is a branch of the Austric group of language family.

Regarding the racial history of Mundari speaking people, different authorities have given different views. Risley (1901), for instance, calls them Dravidians ; according to Rougree (1921) they are Australoid Veddics. R. P. Chanda supported by Sarkar says them to be Nishadas. In 1931 Hutton and B. S. Guha named them Proto-Australoid. Again, writing about the racial origin of the Mundari speaking people A. C. Haddon says --"From the racial point of view the Kolhans can only be placed in the Pre-Dravidian group. In spite of the foregoing account there is something in the facial appearance of many Kolharians which enables an observer to pick out a typical habitant of Chotanagpur from the crowd of southern Dravidian. The Oraons who call themselves Kurukhs of Chotanagpur are physically Pre-Dravidian, they speak Dravidian language closely allied to Canarese. The Mal-Paharias of Rajmahal hills are closely allied to the Oraons." From the above statement it is evident that we cannot identify the group speaking same language as forming one ethnic type. Though the Mundas, the Hos, the

Santhals, the Bhumij, the Kharias the Birhors, the Oroan and the Mal-Paharias belong to different linguistic communities—they have the same physical qualities. All the anthropologists agree on this point and, therefore, it is inferred that there must have been some historical factors for this distinction. However, while we talk of race, the term Pre-Dravidian appears to be inconvenient, for it is a linguistic term. 'Proto-Australoid' is the most suitable term for them, according to our discipline of study which helps us in relating them to the larger Australoid racial group.

We will now discuss under a few items of the cultural elements of the Hos as they are reflected in their songs. We will start with a note on history that will be followed by others one after another.

### History

From the Ho folksongs it appears that they have migrated from Chotanagpur, where they were one with the Mundas. After their settlement in Singhbhum they have fought many battles in order to protect themselves from the invaders. The folk songs reflect some events in history which were shared with Mundas in common.

### Geography

The country of Hos is hilly, full of caves and covered with forests, in which dwell so many kinds of birds, for instance peacocks, parrots, pigeons, *gendaris*, *chititris* etc. and beasts as for example, jackal, pigs, bears, tigers, elephants etc. The important trees and the forests are *sakhu*,

*jamun*, *gular*, *aonla* and *behera* etc. Rivers and streams are not lacking. Some rivers are very deep which cannot be crossed without the help of boat. It is natural that such rivers are dwelling places of crocodiles and snakes. People get crabs and fishes from rivers as supplement to their food.

### Villages

The villages however are not completely isolated. There are village paths, crossing the dense forests and step hills connecting remote villages. Ho houses are mud built and thatched with a kind of grass, which is called *saiu* and some by the straw of paddy crops. But it does not mean that they are not in the know of making houses with stones and to thatch with tiles. Each and every house has a sacred place in the kitchen where the dead ancestors are believed to be residing. They call it, as the Mundas do, *ading*. Apart from the sleeping room, in most of the cases, there is found to be a cattle shed. The walls are beautifully decorated with different designs of paintings and drawings. In the centre of the village there is a dancing ground which is a place for recreation. Each village has its own *smasan* (graveyard). Graves are seen mostly under tamarind trees.

In the Ho houses may be found, the household articles like pots, some utensils, baskets to keep grains, weapons like bows and arrows, and axes. Agricultural implements for instance, plough, ropes, yokes and other necessary articles like umbrellas.



### Social Organisation

Previously Hos were under the control of Rajas. Now each village has its own headman who responds to the *Manki*, the regional head. Villages are composed of persons belonging to different *kilies*. Marriage between persons of the same *kili* is strictly prohibited.

A Ho family generally consists of a man, his wife and their children. Most of the marriages are love-marriage resulting from excess of the bride price. A boy however prefers his paternal uncle's daughter to get her in marriage. As among the Mundas, different articles like turmeric, oil, mango leaves, have important usages in the marriage. A person becomes most responsible and busy as soon as he or she gets himself or herself married.

Hos are great lovers of beauty and art. Their houses are beautifully painted with different kinds of coloured soils. Girls decorate their *chingons* with different kinds of flowers like *atal* and *upal*. Their combs are made of wood, and sometimes made of horn. Girls wear *cowris* in their hands and in their necks. They also wear *mandoli*. Mill-made *saris* are quite popular among them. They even wear silk *saris*. Boys wear *gamchas* and decorate their heads with peacock feathers. They are equally lovers of flowers and different forms of folk-art materials.

Like so many other tribes of Chotanagpur Hos are festival minded. Apart from ritual performances, the thing which is most popular, is their love for singing and dancing. Festivals are waited for eagerly.

Each festival is attached to different kinds of songs and dances. Among the festivals *Mage* is the most important one. Then come *Jomnama* etc. *Nagara*, *madal*, *ghungur*, flute, *benam* etc. are the musical instruments, they use.

### Economy

Hos are largely dependent upon agriculture for their economy. They grow paddy, *mahua*, *gondli* and different kinds of pluses and millet. They also grow vegetables like *reddis* and cauliflower. Hunting and fishing are supplementary to their economy. Their favourite games are *pegions*, *chitiri*, *wild pigs*, *dear* and even *lions*. From the rivers they get fish and crabs etc. which are their foods. Jungles also provide them with various kinds of fruit trees, for instance, *jamun*, *gular*, *mahua*, jack fruits, leaves, flowers and mushrooms. A rich Ho cultivator engages some servants to assist him during agricultural operations. Girls also go to field for work with others. They purchase salt and *kerosin* oil from markets.

### Religion

Singbonga is the supreme bonga. He is the creator of this universe and gives rain for the welfare of human beings. Equally powerful is the *Desauli*, under whom all the other bongas work. *Deori* is the religious leader of the village, all the offerings on village level are made by *Deuri*. Bongas are offered sacrifices and prayers at the time of festivals in which *Mage* (beginning of the year) *Ba* (flower festival) *Hero* (sowing festival) are most

important. But some bongas are profane. They are connected with the witches. Dead bodies, generally, are buried. Again after certain period of time a slab is erected in the Sasandiri in the name of the deceased person.

### **Cultural Contact**

Nearness of Hos the vast Hindu society is obvious in their folksongs. Rama, Lakhsmana, Sita, Krishna, Radhika, Gopinis, Ahalya, Savitri, the Ganges, etc. figure in their folksongs. With the growth of means of communication, distant towns like Calcutta, Dumka have become well known to them. Even train, buses and aeroplanes are not foreign to them. With the spread of schools, Hos are becoming more and more conscious toward education. From the folk-songs it also appears that their language has been much influenced by Oriya and Bengali. For reason of space it has not been possible to accommodate songs in original in this study. It is nothing more than an introductory note about the cultural elements in Ho songs..

what is at the back of you, my son-in-law, that is what I have made into curry for you.” So the son-in-law turned round and saw it was a bamboo door. The son-in-law, however, thought in his mind, “I find this curry very much delicious, when everyone is in sound sleep, I shall walk off with this door”. Thus he made up his mind. True enough, when all had done eating and retired for the night, he gets up quietly and loosened and took the door on his back and went off with it.

The story —“The Three Fools” - tells how three fools were quarrelling when they saw a bunch of plantain at the foot of a tamarind tree. One was saying, “I shall take these plantains” ; and that the other was saying, “No, it was I, who put them down before me”. In this way they were quarrelling hotly and were saying to each other, “You fellow, you are a great fool”. And they said the same to each other. Then one of them said, “Look here, you are calling me a fool, in what respect am I a fool ?” The other answered “in the same way you talk.” They were quarrelling and none of them carried the plantain away.

Another story is entitled as “The Conversation of Kalu and Suna.” It is better to narrate the whole story as under :—

Kalu was occupied preparing a bit of ground floor to have it to bring his paddy up there. Just then Suna and a couple of companions were on their way to the jungle to cut tree. When they reached him, Kalu asked “where are you going in such a hurry ?”

“Frontwards” Suna replied. Then Suna said to his companion—“Cut this tree”. Kalu said, “It is for preservation.” “How is it preserved ? Do people go backwards or frontwards ?” “You, yourself go in which direction, frontwards or backwards ?”

“Yes, that is naturally so”, Kalu replied.

“Understand that then”, Suna said.

“What are you going to cut ?” Kalu asked.

“We are going to cut tree”, Suna replied.

“Where ?” asked Kalu.

“At the foot of the hill”, Suna answered.

“Yes, naturally”, Kalu said, “People cut trees at the foot. I mean on which hill ?”

“But, you did not ask me anything about the hill”, Suna replied, “You only said, where are you going ? Therefore, I said to you that we are going to cut the tree at the foot of the hill”.

While they were talking together in this way, somebody was driving a bullock-cart in that direction, and the cart-driver was walking alongside. Seeing him Kalu said, “Look here, you, why don’t you drive the bullocks sitting on the wheels ? You see, when you drive walking you have to come now to this side, then to that side ?”

Then Suna said to Kalu, “Look here you fellow, you are a very stupid person, in the whole world there is no greater stupid like you.”

“Look here, you,” Kalu said, “you are rating me badly before so many people. You have made me a stupid person”.

“Yes”, Suna replied, “in a very true sense I may call you stupid. Why even now you do not know

how to cut a tree, moreover, you tell this man to mount on the wheels of the cart."

"If I should not tell him to mount the wheels", Kalu asked, "where should I tell him to mount, you fellow?"

"The wheels turn round, you follow," Suna said.

Then Kalu became silent. Like a buffalo he was unable to say a single word, he was only quietly smiling to himself and his companions were laughed at him for all they heard. And here I have brought this story to an end.

In "The Story of a Thief" it is narrated that how a thief was stealing. One day he was cutting the paddy of other people. He cut too much, meantime, the master of the field saw him and beat him very badly.

There are many Santals as others who do need money as loan for their livelihood and therefore do have transaction with moneylenders. Here is a story regarding the moneylender.

"To Play Back and Forward". It is narrated that how a Santal man cheated a moneylender. The story runs as follows :—

Once upon a time there was a man who was owing money to a moneylender. In spite of his paying a little now and then, the old debt increased. He was also taking fresh loan, at last he was unable to pay it off and the moneylender was scolding him much. The man was afraid of this scolding, therefore as soon as he saw the moneylender coming towards his house, he would hide himself. The moneylender asked the wife of the man, "Where is your man" ?

She replied, "He has gone to play Back and Forward".

One day he managed to caught him. He said 'Look here you so and so, why don't you pay me what you are oweing ? Are you going to pay me or not, please tell me that. Day after day I am coming to you in vain. And when I ask your wife about you, she says, 'he has gone to play Back and Forward', thereupon I do not find you at home."

The man replied, "You have no idea what a beautiful play it is, that is the reason why I go day after day to that play.

The moneylender said, "Is it possible for me to learn that play ?

The man said, "Of course".

"Then teach me also" the moneylender said.

The man said "Very well, come to-morrow early in the morning. It has become full day already, it will not be possible for me to take you to-day there at the play ground. To learn it, it is necessary to practice it in the early morning."

The following morning, moneylender came as advised and called out—"Haliow, so and so, are you at home ?"

The man came out and called up some people of the village. He said to the moneylender—"If I teach you the Back and Forward play how much will you pay me for that ?"

"If you want money, I shall give you money," the moneylender replied.

"I shall not take money" the man said. "Whatever debt I have with you, let that be off, then I

shall teach you, otherwise, I am not going to do so."

The moneylender agreed.

The man said, "Alright I shall tell you all there is about its meaning and significance. Please break the straw to show that you have let me free of my debt and come along. I shall now teach you all and everything about the play. If I don't teach you, here is the man as a witness who will follow us."

After hearing through the matter over, the moneylender thereupon really broke the straw in the presence of the witness in order to wipe off all debts and obligations of the man as his fees for teaching the play and said, "There you are, I have let you free from all your debts to me. Now please teach me."

The man then brought a small piece of burning fire wood, whereupon he invited both the moneylender and the witness to come along. Having gone towards the forest, they sat down on a Janhe corn thrashing floor. The man said, "Let us put our clothes down here, it does not matter wheather the witness will take off his clothes or not, but we two must take them off, then only the game will be started."

Thereupon both of them took off their clothes. Now it also was very cold that day. The man then set fire to the straw and said to the other. "Let us warm ourselves a little first, then I shall teach you the game."

Both of them were warming themselves at the fire. The man placed quite a lot of straw into the fire. It suddenly blazed up into great flames. When



it burnt low they draw near to the fire. The moneylender said, "Please be quick and teach me the play. Let this be enough, we have well warmed ourselves."

"Look here we are playing don't you understand?"

The man said, "See, how we are moving forward, and backward. This is the Back and Forward play. Please be attentive and try to learn the game".

The moneylender then felt exceedingly regretful and said, "I am sorry, on account of this play I am certainly not going to wipe off so much debt of yours to me. You have played a trick to me."

The man then said to the witness, "Please, Sir, hear and mark exactly what we two are saying. This moneylender, what did he said a while ago, and what is he saying now."

"Yes," he said, "I have heard all that both of you have said."

The moneylender thereupon filed a suit on account of this debt. When the day for the suit was fixed the man brought with him the witness before the Judge. The man pleaded in accordance with what they had agreed upon, and when the witness also said the same, the case was dismissed. Thus they gave the moneylender a good rating.

In the story of "The Foolish Woman" it is told, once the whole villagers had fixed a day for feasting with the sacrifice of a bullock to the ancestors. Just one day before the day appointed Zaminder's *gomosta* came and carried all men of that village away for forced labour camp of the Zaminder. The women-folk of that village then came together and talked and decided themselves to sacrifice the bullock. As

soon as it became dawn they made things ready necessary for the sacrifice and tied an oxen up. Then the wife of the headman of the village commenced to offer an invocation as follows : "Look here, the fellow bullocks, we are killing an oxen for the men who will soon assemble for the feast. Oh, please see so that our men may come back from Zaminder's forced labour camp before the feast starts."

Having spoken in this way the wife of the village headman asked the other women to fell the cow. But they did not know where to fell. Then they decided to fell its soul. But they did not know where the soul is. Then a woman said—"In any place where you see anything moving." So they looked at the cow and saw its tail was moving. Then they started to cut the tail of the cow.

As soon as they hit the ox with the axe-head it felt the pain jumped and kicked. Then it got loose and ran away. It ran off through a cotton field and they gave chase all they could. Running along the ox kicked down a good deal of burst cotten pods. They said, "Look here all along, here its fat has fallen down." So they ate that cotton taking it as fat. In olden days, the people felt, the women were silly in this way.

In another story it is narrated that women were quarrelling for a small baby. One says, "This baby is mine" and the other says, "No this baby is mine." Then the matter was brought to the king. The king gave his judgment. He said, "If the matter is so, then it will be better to divide this baby into two equal parts." Hearing this real mother said, "If

so, then this baby should be handed over to the second woman.” Then the king gave his final judgment and gave the baby to the real mother.

So long we discussed about the foolishness of the Santals. We will now come to the stories regarding human sacrifices.

A sacrifice has been defined to be something which is devoted to a deity and consumed either in his honour or by him alone and his worshippers. In the case of a human sacrifice, the victim is supposed to be consumed by the deity alone. The method by which an offering is believed to be done varies according to the dwelling place of the deity or to the conception of Godhead entertained by the worshippers. Sacrificed death bodies may be buried in the field or cast down precipices into clefts or dead body which are offered to the ethereal and ravines. Those celestial deities are burnt so that the smoke thereof may rise up to the sky.

Those which are offered to the water deities are thrown into the water so that they might get drowned or the skin of the sacrificed victim is draped upon the image of the god or the god's portion and it may be exposed in the expectation that deity will come and consume it secretly.

In the following pages further attention will be given to human sacrifice that are prevalent among the Santals of this area.

Whenever a tank was excavated and no water comes out of the spring, it was believed that the absence of water was due to the water spirit's wrath and that the tank would fill up with water if only

the offended deity be propitiated by human sacrifice. The following story stands as an example—

In a folktale entitled as “The Caterpillar Boy” it is stated that the caterpillar boy was subsequently metamorphosed into a man. Some youth, defeated a neighbouring Raja (King) in a battle. Thereupon the farmer’s father-in-law, who was also a Raja, became jealous and began to fear that his son-in-law (the caterpillar boy) would also subdue him. So he began to conceive a plot to bring about his death. At that time he was excavating a tank but no water was welling up from it. In order to propitiate the offended water-deity, who was holding the water, elephants, horses, oxen, buffaloes and other animals were sacrificed but no water came out of the tank. Thereafter the father-in-law ordered the caterpillar boy to mount upon his horse and to take his stand in the middle of the tank. As soon as he did so water welled up from the bottom of the tank and filled it up to the brink in no time.

In another folktale entitled as “Kuar and the Raja’s Daughter”, it is stated that in order to earn their livelihood the merchant’s son Kuwar, the hero of the story, and his wife had to work as Kulies in a tank which was being excavated by a Raja. When no water came out of the spring the Raja had the centre-post planted in the middle of the tank. But still no water came out of it. Then he had sacrificed to the water deity an elephant, a horse, a camel and various other animals. But still the tank did not fill up with water. Then the merchant’s son Kuwar who was working as a Kuli

was forcibly seized and bound to the centre-post and sacrificed to the water deity. Thereupon the water rushed out of the bottom of tank and filled it up to the brim and Kuwar was sacrificed.

Similar practice is also traceable in the folktale of the Santals living in the Hazaribagh district, for example, in the folktale entitled as "Seven Brothers and their Sister", it is narrated that the seven brothers had a tank excavated so that their names might be perpetuated by it. But as their ill-luck would have it, no water came out of it. Thereupon they consulted a 'Jugi Gossain (a Santal Soothsayer) who said to them that if they would offer their sister as a sacrifice to the spirit of the tank, it would be filled in with water. Acting up his advice they ordered her to fetch water from the tank. Accordingly, she went inside the empty tank to fill her pitcher with water. As soon as she went into it, water began to flow out and filled up the tank till she was drowned in it.

In another tale entitled as "The Girl who always found Helpers", it is stated that once upon a time there lived six brothers and a sister. All brothers were married but their sister remained unmarried. Whenever they left their home for business purposes, their wives who hated their maiden sister-in-law from the bottom of their hearts harassed and worried her in every possible way. Then the brothers came to know of their wives' cruel conduct towards their sister. They made up their mind to punish them. With this object in view, they had a deep well dug. On the pretence of propitiating the water-spirit they ordered

their wives to take pot in their hands, with offerings of rice and the like, go to the well and stand round the brink thereof. As soon as the wicked women arrived at the well with the offerings and stood round the margin of the well their husbands from behind pushed them into the well wherein the latter drowned into water.

It would appear that in ancient time there also prevailed among the Santals the custom of human sacrifice to the earth deity for the purpose of obtaining good luck and of burying the victim's corpse under-neath the earth. This is evidenced by the Santali folktale entitled—"The Raja's Advice", wherein it is stated that on his death-bed, a Raja gave his son several bits of advice among which was the following --"Never divulge a secret to your wife", After his father's death, he became the Raja and made up his mind to put the aforementioned advice to the proof. So one day he took a spade and barried an old earthen pot in the corner of his garden and allowed his wife to see him doing so, and asked what he was burying. Swearing her to secrecy, he told her that a child had come staying to his house and he had buried the baby. But this caused much trouble to him later.

# Utility and Achievements of Folk-art and craft in Bihar

By

Madanmohan Sinha 'Manuj'

From time immemorial the women of Bihar are practising the *sikki*-craft which has already been discussed by a different contributor in this book. It need not be repeated here once again. But it must be said that the some such work is not only confined to North Bihar but it is also prevalent in the east of Uttar Pradesh and south of Nepal and in different districts of South of Bihar like Sahabad, Gaya, Monghyr, Bhagalpur and Patna. The Tharu women excell in the skill in *sikki* and *munj*-work.

There is a tradition among the Tharus of Champaran district that all the unmarried girls should have to learn the art of *munj*-craft and they should carry specimens of their own works with them to their in-laws' houses. The process of making *munj* is same as that of *sikki* but there are differences in shapes, designs and symbols between *munj* and *sikki*-works. *Munj* is more decorative yet neat and useful for household use and decoration.

Besides these, *Sujani* is an important folk-art form of Bihar. The symbols used in the *sujani* are either mythological or social and conugal that encourage sex appeal. Some *kanthas* invite appreciation and attraction of the visitors for unique needle designs

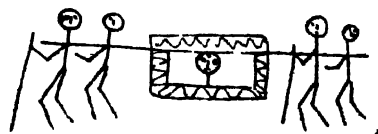
depicting the sex symbols of a pair of birds sitting on the same branch of a tree or men and women embracing each other. These *kanthas* may be small or big in sizes according the need. They are used in wrapping books or as *bethan* or tray-cover, cover of palanquins, horse saddle, mirror and comb-case, inkpot-stand, and many other products.

Pottery and clay-toys were household products previously but now-a-days these are limited to certain artisan families only. Excavation at different places like Vaishali, Rajgriha, Nalanda and in the Gangetic belt at Buxur and other places have proved its root to ancient past. A handful of families have inherited the art of pottery making and the production of clay-toys from their forefathers.

After the advent of independence these artisan families are getting encouraged by the government and thus those people who practise this craft are not facing as bad days as were faced by their forefathers in the pre-independent period. During the *Dewali* and the *Saraswati-puja* as well as in marriage and other ceremonies clay-elephants with birds, burning-lamps, grain-pots etc. are needed by the Hindu families. These symbolise wealth, love and prosperity of life. Besides providing clay-works for these festivals, the artisans also produce such articles which are wanted in daily life, viz., earthen pot of different sizes and shapes, cups, dishes, *kalasas* (pitchers) *deepas* (lamps) and many other products. They also make pot for storing grain and for keeping foods of the animals besides *khapraila* (tiles) and others. Even though a potter seldom gets



### Some Specimens of mural drawing



Palanquin



A Tharu girl making *Sikki*-basket

[ Drawing by Ashutosh Pandey ]

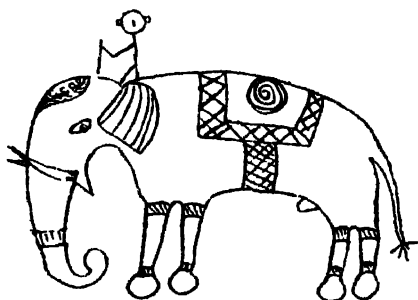
an opportunity to exhibit his talents in toy-making or pottery-work because all the time he is busy in manufacturing utility products for his livelihood. Although figure artists of Darbhanga, Chhapra, Sasaram and Nasirigarh (Sahabad) Haveli Kharagpur (Monghyr), Vaisali (Muzaffarpur), etc. try their best in attracting a large number of users. They are getting better market now since the Government of Bihar has taken various plans to popularise the products of the folk-artisans. The Government also encourage the artisans with aids and opportunities for getting better results into klin of firing and glazing.

The lac-work is another old craft of Bihar. Since time unknown lac-bangles are being used by the womenfolk. As raw lac are found in huge quantity in South Bihar quite a large number of artisans have specialised in the works of lac-bangles. Lac-work of Patna has its own charm for finish. At present vermilion-box, bangle-box, etc. too are being manufactured of lac. Members of the *Hanri*-caste have made it as their traditional occupation.

The Institute of Industrial Design is experimenting to make products for wall decoration—pots, table-lamps, toys and other utility products according to changing need of the hour. Projection centres are working at Patna city, Dumraon, Sahabad, Ranchi, Gaya, Hazaribagh, Vishnugam, Lalganj, Mazaffarpur, Darbhanga etc. districts.

The most important craft of Bihar is woodwork. Wooden toy is an olden craft of Bihar. Patna city has always been famous for its painted wooden-toys.

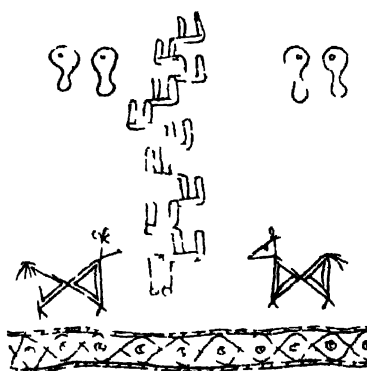
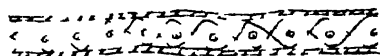
### Some Specimens of mural drawing



An elephant with rider



Peacock



Sandals, creepes and horses



Decoration

It tells the story of human development in most simple yet in appealing manner. This trade is now suffering much due to plastic and rubber toys, but it has still its scope for its durability, simplicity and familiarity with the masses. The Toy Development Centre, Ranchi and some Production Training centres recently opened by the Government in Bhagalpur, Singhbhum, Sahabad, Santhal Parganas, Vaisali, Gaya, Ranchi, Patna City etc. are encouraging wooden-products and toy-making.

Let us remember that carpentry plays an important part in rural economy. Plough, carts, cots, *chankis*, chairs, tables, doors, windows, spinning-wheel, *sindurdani* (vermilion-box) etc. are made of wood with the help of carpenters. Again there is a useful and ancient form of craft. It is bamboo craft. The practical utility of bamboo has been realised from the early days when people used to live in jungle. With the growth of civilization, they came to Iron-age and invented small tools. Gradually they began to use raw materials in different ways. When this craft was developed fully, its demand increased as utility articles of domestic use, and a group of people took to this craft. In Bihar generally they are called as Dom. Bamboo craft is of great use in house-making, boating, fighting, food-grain grinding, storing, ploughing and the type works. It is regarded as a sacred tree. Anwal, Pakur, Bergad trees and their branches too are regarded as sacred so they are used in many religious ceremonies and functions of the Hindus. Any product made of these trees too are considered as sacred. Bamboo-

crafts and the products of these trees had glorious days during the Mauryan, Gupta and Pala periods. Everybody had to make use of it because without bamboo no household work could be done with. There are a number of references in the *Vedas* and in the *Puranas* where bamboo were in extensive use. In the folksongs of Bihar there are references of bamboos and bamboo-products which are used by different people in various works. This industry suffered much due to the lack of organisation, financial difficulty and absence of encouragement from those people who are entitled to do that. In the villages of Bihar *banskheth* (bamboo-cots) *machans* (gates) ladders, etc. are made of bamboo since ancient days and today we can also find tables, chairs, baskets, book-shelves, and many other utility-products made of bamboo which are popular too. For more than ten years Government of Bihar is trying to develop Japanese technique of bamboo craft. Research in designing of modern process of manufacture are being carried on in the Industrial Design Institute, Patna. The State Government has also production centers at Patna, Vaisali, Madhubari and Murhu (Ranchi).

In the same way the cane-work has its roots in ancient past. It has supplemented bamboo-work due to its flexibility. It can be easily blended to suit the design of the craftsmen. Chairs, beds, sofas etc. being made of cane are getting popularity in the cities. In the ancient days it was used for sticks, baskets and other products. In Bihar today, it is taking part of bamboo industry but separate scope

of chairs, sofas, centre-table, dressing-table, dinning table, fashion-table, baskets-boxes, trays etc. made of cane are there that attract purchasers. So businessmen too are getting incentive to invest money on it. Cane is being replaced by nylon or plastic threads now for making the top of the chairs, sofas, and others but it has been generally accepted that cane products has its own prestige and glamour thus its scope has not altogether been lost.

Bihar can also be proud of its stone-ware and stone-work. Stone has been used in different forms so much so that it represented a very old age of human civilization as stone-age. Stone has its relation with the making of houses, instruments, weapons, furnitures, utensils like dishes, glasses, etc. which are needed for sacred purposes. Besides, widows specially use the stone-ware for taking luncheon and eating purposes. It is also used for house-building work. The magnificent monasteries, temples and other antiquities constitute virtually cultural wealth of Bihar are made of stone. There are many references in the ancient *silpashastras* which have laid down definite 'procedure to be followed by the stone mason inherited from father to son'. Even now this tradition is maintained. A group of artisan of the Bihar are still engaged themselves in this craft. And the utensils like *pathari* in various spahes are needed for domestic work like grinding stone, *sillorha*, *okhali*, (mortar) *chhaki* (janta) etc. too are made of stone. 'Salgrama' which is a symbol of Narayana or Vishnu or Siva-linga are also represented by stones. One can also find

stones as symbols of different folk-gods and goddesses which are worshipped everywhere especially near a temple or under a tree. One important centre of stone-work is situated near Barbara hills in Gaya district and Chuar in Mirzapur District of Uttar Pradesh. Realising its utility some important production training centres have been established by State Government to revive the stone-craft at Patharkatti, Gaya, Chaudil, Karaikilla, Sasaram, Karwandian, Ghatsila, Daulatganj and Dumka.

In the early days of civilization man began to use skin of beasts as protective provision for his body. At a later stage, however, the art of preparing skin-clothes, covers, defence-weapons and skin-laces were developed. Then came the age of tanning, colouring, polishing, and cobbling. Truly, there is nothing like leather in its durability, strength, lightness and the ease with which it can be cut and joined, made it for use for thousands and one purposes. The cover of old armour, harness *talwar* or sword, *bjojali*, *dhat* (shield) chappel-shoes, suitcase, belt, casket-whips etc. are made out of decorated leather. In agricultural operation also leather belts are necessary. Saddle and bridle of horses, *chamauli* (belt) for bulls, and beautiful glass beads and shoes are made of leather. It is a specialised job for *Chamar* or Cobblar caste people in Bihar. These people learn leather-work from their forefathers. There are references in folktales that previously leather workers were so expert in their craft that they could prepare refined skin clothes which covered the entire body of any

person who wanted to hide himself by such products. The leather has been of much use for people living in cold climate and it has rare value in book-binding and the type works. Now Bihar has realised its importance greatly so the State has opened leather-training-cum-production centres at various places under the patronization of Village and Khadi Industry Commission, Block Development Offices, Industry and Labour Departments. Co-operative Societies too are taking interest in it. Many tannery centres, leather workers industrial co-operative societies are at work for the development of leather industry with the financial assistance of the Government for purchasing modern tools and raw materials. Experts of these organisations are available on demand for technical advice in preparing fancy and utility products.

Jewellery, brass-metal, gold and silver works also from part of our folk-art and craft tradition. Iron products are 'a must' for any activity of human-being. The village life and agriculture is an impossibility without a blacksmith. The wooden-plough needs iron blade or share known as 'Far' and modern improved ploughs are made mostly of iron and they are popularly called *Lohia-hal*. Other equipments like *khunti* (hoe), *kodal* (spade), *phaware* (mattert) *khanti* (digging rod) *jangi* (hatchet weeder, tractor and harvesting tools like 'hansia' (sickle) are prepared by iron. The State is using hand-pumps in great numbers. Very off and on they get breakdown. For repairing these and many other things blacksmiths are 'a must.' Recently Govern-



ment of Bihar has opened some training institutes where workers are being trained for these works. Blacksmiths are also expert in preparing different boxes, locks and keys, gates and tools for agriculturists and many other products to suit the need of the village people.

Brass and copper jars are used by our craftsmen in making household utensils including pots which are used in worship of gods, plates, cooking vessels, dishes, water pots of different sizes and shapes. These are made by *Thathera*-caste. But this craft is not in so flourishing condition as in U. P. which is the neighbouring State of Bihar.

Art of making ornaments was specialised by goldsmiths known as *Sonars*. It has a very old reference in our sculpture. Women are always fond of ornaments and beauty, and men have prepared beautiful ornaments of gold, silver etc. to beautify them. In olden times ornaments were also used by kings, princess and rich men but now it is confined to womenfolk only. It is a delicate craft and it is learned only by practice. Art objects discovered from the excavation of Pataliputra, Vaishali, Rajgriha, Bodh-Gaya, Vikramsila, Nalanda etc. places show lavish use of jewellery. The modern taste and designs have crept into the art rural areas, yet the traditional jewellery are available in abundant.

The folk-art of Bihar has been mostly nourished by village craftsmen, artisans and housewives. It is very much true because we find women everywhere are the roots of inspiration of folk-art. The womenfolk use their leisure in making *kasida* or

embroidery, applique, *zari*, which craft they learn from their elders who are experienced women. A large number of women are practicing in this craft for many centuries. At present its designs are getting changed, new designs are coming into being in stead of old and traditional designs (viz. religious figures or geometrical motifs). The artisans are preparing new designs taking the help of different design books which are very popular in Bihar now. Previously it was not so simple to learn. Again, in every home of Bihar needle work is getting modernized and technically developed. The marriagable girls previously spent a valuable time in learning this art from their elders but now they can very quickly learn it with the help of modern technology and books.

Applique is a type of needle work but instead of using coloured threads here pieces of varieties of torn clothes are used. It is one of the oldest handicrafts of the State and is still in existence. It has greatest economic possibilities as it is made from torn clothes which are normally thrown away. By the help of needles and scissors the entire work is done with. A large number of men and women of Bihar are engaged in this craft. Craftsmen collect the waste and torn pieces of clothes, dye those according to scheme in attractive colours and make dolls of various types and sizes viz. males, females, figures of child interest like king, queen, animals like elephant, horses, birds and others. *Chiraghar* with dancing birds and set of dolls are sent as presentation to the relatives at festivals and ceremonial occasions by

the Hindus of different classes. In the manufacture of these the artisans make use of straw pieces, *bhushi* (husks), cotton etc. for the base of the doll. Face, hairs, etc. are drawn by the needle. Efforts are being made for the development of this craft by organising production-cum-training centres and co-operative societies at Patna and Ranchi. Industrial Training Schools located at different district head-quarters are playing vital roles in training women workers for this craft. They are also learning *zari*-work, decorated dresses of landlords, kings, queens and other works. It was at the height of its progress during the Mughals when as many as four hundred *zari*-workers lived alone in Patna city. There are various kind of *zari*-work i.e. *Salma*, *Kangnt*, *Bulean*, *Kora*, *Dubka*, *Chamki*, etc. In *Saima* and *Kagmi* type of *zari* usually silver and golden threads are used. The *zari*-work is done on Mosnad, Sari, Cabin, Carpets, Galicha, Jhool, Pillowcover, *Salwar Kurta*, Cap, Jumper, Sword-cover, Sandle, Shoe, *Dupatta*, Turban, Marriage-costumes. Umbrella, Fan, Box-covers, Tray-covers, Cushion-covers etc. Once it had great demand not only in the whole of India but also in abroad. Owing to abolition of Zamindari and the merger of native states with the Republic of India this craft suffered because it was the princess and the rich people who were its patron.

*Rangra* are the people who undertake craft of dying clothes in beautiful colours. They prepare colour and dye *saris* in different designs. This craft is being undermined by printed *zaris* and printed *saris* and piece clothes. Artisans also prepare designs

on paper, then cut it on wodden *thappo* and then they print by pressing *thappo* on the cloth piece with the help of colours. With the advent of cheap synthetic dyes fine indigenous dyes gradually lost the market. Places like Bhagalpur, Patna, Gaya, Ajipur, Muzaffarpur, Madhubani, Darbhanga, Saran, Arrah, Dumroan, Sasaram, Narsinganj etc. are well-known for this craft. Sursand—Nepal borders has rich tradition of calico printing or coloured dyeing or *baudhani*-work. Inspired by the colours of Rainbow many saris are printed. These *saris* are called *sursent*-print. Technique employed for this is very simple. A white piece of cloth is marked with design by wooden block with earthen colour. The outlines are then tied in tiny knots where white dots are marked. Then pieces of cloth is disposed into yellow colour and then tied again to get yellow dot over white ones. After the processing, it gives beautiful effect. The Government has established some centres for the development of this craft at few places where new designs and new techniques are introduced. Co-operative societies also are being organised among the printers.

Similarly, the *tankuli* or spangle work is one of the oldest crafts of this State. In Patna city alone, about 700 workers are engaged in this work. This Industry had seen its paradise in the past. It is correlated with the work of gold, silver, leaf making which is popularly called as *talaque* or *warq* making. About 500 familes depend on this *warq*-preparing business. It is nothing but an ornamental piece of work on fine glass with *talaque* (gold, silver leades)

which is used by the women at the centre of their forehead as *suhag chihni* or mark of good fortune. In this industry there is division of work from olden days. If one person makes glass, other member of the family cuts the glass into pieces according to the specified size. Next man finishes it. Now-a-days *tikli* is not in use by the women-folk. Hence market of *tikli*-work has lost roots in masses but the people who really appreciate this art still like to have the hand made *tikli*.

Art of spinning and weaving is also an oldest craft yet popular. It includes making of *junewa* or *yajnopavita* by the Brahmin families, spinning and weaving of *gamchha*, *sari*, *dhoti*, *lungi*, preparing of mats, carpets, *asans*, head-dress called *pag* and also preparing of ropes for varied use in domestic life.

The art of gardening for a variety of flowers of different colour, shape, smell and effects are known to the *Malhori* or Mali caste from long past. These people have mastered the art of growing, plucking, decorating, designing flowers and preparing garlands for their customers. This art of flower decoration is popular since olden days. Previously flower was used for body decoration by ladies and gents in the olden days, now-a-days, it has been limited to certain social and religious functions only. Body decoration also includes *tattooing*, *missi*, *mehendi*, *sandal* and *panpushal*. In *Godna* ladies engrave in black design on their arms, legs, hands, and face. They also apply collyrium (*kajal*), *dhutra*-milk or some other chemical and starts pricking with needle. Ladies accept it with pleasure taking it to be good

skin decoration. Mostly, it is black dots but sometimes it is also in lines and covers which have been given popular names as *Banla*, *Bagal*, *Mutka*, *Motki*, *Hasuli*, *Murli*, *Shunkhachudi*, *Patthi*, *Unto*, *Lulhua*, *Pairi* etc. They all depict association with things around them. *Pasahani* is face decoration in marriage ceremony and such other occasion with *Sindur*, *Tikli*, *Khudichamki*, *Galphulla*, *Kumkum* etc. *Mehendi*-leaves are crushed and pasted to get coloured designs on the palms of girls women in the month of *Shrawan*, the rainy season. It adds colour to hands and legs. To get better result *katha* and *Bhindi*-juice are mixed with the crushed leaves and it is applied on the palms. Men decorate their forehead by sandal, *Roli*, *Sindur* in different designs according to their religious believes. Worshippers of Siva will have *Bibhuti* and *Chandau-Pralep* in the different style while Vaishnavites will decorate themselves with *Tripunda* and *Kanthi* garland in the neck. The worshipper of *Devi Bhaghati* will always decorate his forehead with *Roli*. Ladies apply colours in their teeth. At times they invested gold in their teeth. They also colour their lips with different ingredients.

We will conclude this paper by mentioning art of *Alpana*, *Chauk* or *Rangoli*, wall decoration by *Thapa*, *Kohabar* and *Bandanwara*. Since Vedic period we have been decorating *Yajna Mandaps*, *Vedikas* and floors artistically with the help of rice powder or wet rice, red-sindur, (vermilion), *Haldi* (yellow) etc. The designs may have *tantrik* background or reflect decorated instinct of women for imitating nature

around her but it is a fact that *swastik*, *banswai*, bamboo-clump *deep* (lamp) *mora* peacock and other symbols and motifs from part of designs used in floor and wall decorations. Now-a-days it is not prevalent in cities but it is still practiced by womenfolk in villages. Specially *Nai* and *Nain* can prepare attractive designs in a minute. They also know the art of foot decoration and nail polish of ladies by *alta*. There was an art of decorating *arti*. While welcoming or offering respects to anyone decorated *arti* plate was taken round the face. The decoration work has wide popularity. So much so that ladies offering meals decorated the coloured serials in the manner that it looked like *Pan* of *Shakh* or some bird etc. Dinning table decoration was much advanced in form of art and craft of cooking fiftysix varieties of *Vyanjana*. Indian ladies excelled in fruit preservation and making *Achars*, *Chatni*, *Bori* and so on.

Folk-art has become our way of life. It has its glorious achievements and unchallenged utility. It marches on with the development of society. It should continue to cater to the needs of masses and may not become a piece of the show-case. Everything possible is being made to revive the folk-art in Bihar. We will have to do something more for the recognition and encouragement to the folk-artisans to enable them to achieve requisite place in our society. Thus for the development of handicrafts three fold programme should be started. The first and most important thing is to carry on research on designs, colouring, polishing, finishing, working

method etc. and providing training to the artisans at different places with scholarships, boarding and lodging facilities etc. Which will attract young artisanas and provide relief to old. Then, encourage trained artists to start mass training centres in the villages with Government help. Later they may be conversed into training even production centres to produce articles on large scale and organised its sale in Indian and foreign markets. This will also ensure better livelihood to the artists and craftsmen around the centre.

Then their will be need of co-operative federation of artisans which and craftsmen will maintain co-operative societies. It will mobilize artistic talents to do work efficiently. Whenever necessary they will be provided with money from the co-operative societies for purchasing raw-materials, equipments or tools. And then they should be recognised by the State. The State should also see their healthy growth and should always discourage any unhealthy competition in and among such people. Best workers and artisans should be rewarded every year for encouragement.



# Cultural Elements in Munda Riddles

By

**Cernus Hembrom**

The Mundas are one of the major tribes of Chotanagpur and they have attracted the attention of the anthropologists and folklorologists in recent time. In addition to the book on the Munda by Sarat Chandra Roy (Munda and Their Country, 1912) Sri Jagadish Trigunait has published a volume on Munda folksongs (*Bansari bujrahi hai*). His another book on Munda folktales has just been released by the Government of Bihar. It is unfortunate that the Munda riddles have remained yet unpublished and in the present paper an attempt has been made to examine the cultural elements in Munda riddles. It is based on the field work done in the year 1961 in village Rurki and Rajmari in the Ranchi district. Out of 163 riddles collected from different villages 50 are being given here for a critical perusal.

## **Riddles (Nutum Khani)**

In India the most common word used for riddle is 'Paheli' which is derived from Sanskrit "Praheḷika" or "Pravalika" meaning a complicated question, where truth is concealed and similar thing is placed open to mislead or deceive. "Bujhawal" is also a very common word used for riddle. In tribal world of the Mundas it is called "Nutum Khani", in Santhali

it is called "Kudum". In Ho it is called "Chapakat Kahani" and in Oraon it is called "Khiri".

Generally riddles are considered as a favourite play of the children. Some riddles are thousand and thousands of years old and some are new. It is very strange to note that most of the riddles are being composed by unsophisticated folks whose names are not known.

Riddles are the reflection of the culture of any society. By studying riddles we can know the cultural traits of that society. They are most intimate reflection of love between man and man. Elders teach riddles to the youngsters and it goes down from generation to generation. Riddles are regarded as the storehouse of ancient wisdom. They are meaningful in themselves and sometimes contain historical information.

### **Natural surroundings of the Mundas**

The country of Munda is surrounded by the broken ranges of hills. The land is covered with dense forests and some lands are in the open field. There are different types of trees, flower trees, fruit trees and so on in the forest. The rivers running down from the hills make valleys. Some rivers are running along with the plain field on which the Mundas have settled permanently.

Mundas are nature-loving people, they live on the lap of nature. They are well acquainted with the objects found in the forests, hills and rivers. They have detailed lists of trees, plants, birds, beasts and insects. Among beasts—tigers, elephants, snakes, horses, bears, jackals are important. Among

the insects and water dwelling animals are ants, frogs, katkom, silkworms, crabs, tortoises, fishes etc. The birds with which they are well acquainted, are hopu, bat, eagles, peacock, maina etc. The trees and plants with which they are well acquainted are putkal, karanj, keond, chart tree, *bel* tree, atnak, sal, tamarind, bhelwa, gulur, jamun, ankal, jack tree, mahua and sekeren. There are some grasses like sabae. They are also well acquainted with wild flowers like sal flower, karanj flower, merry gold flower, gulaichi flower etc. The fruit trees with which they are well acquainted are sakhua, keond, tamarind, charfruit, sekere fruit, gulur, ankol, bhelwa, and so on.

### **Individual and Society**

Among the Mundas the position of Pahan is regarded as high because he is the Headman of the village. There are other castes also who reside in the village of the Mundas as for example, blacksmith, gowata, routia etc. Generally the work of children are playing. But the Munda children are there to help their parents. A child begins taking part in work by grazing cattle in the field. Such hardworks like cutting the woods and cutting the soil are done by men whereas easy household works are done by women. Dance is an essential trait of Munda culture, their life and living.

### **The house and household articles**

The houses of Mundas are made of mud walls. They are supported by strong pillars and the roof of the houses are thatched by tiles. The door of houses are made of wood and bamboo and they use locks for locking the door made of leaf.

Among the household articles are a rope with which the grains are stored, silait-lorha, pathar, dhenki, grinding stone, dauli, arrow, bow, chala with which rice bear is distilled, lamp for getting light, earthen pot, khatia for sleeping and sitting, plough for ploughing the field, busula, scissors and umbrella are important articles. They also have some musical instruments like drum, dholak, mandal. Further they have net for catching fish, comb, mat to sit on and for spreading boiled paddy to be dried and swords. Thus there are different types of household articles i. e. agricultural instruments, weapons and objects for daily use.

### **Economy, Food and Dresses**

The Mundas are essentially an agricultural tribe. They cultivate their land with traditional wooden plough which they call '*nahuel*'. They have bullocks, buffaloes, yoke, ploughshares, sticks, leveling instruments and such other things for this purpose. They yield from the land paddy, janhe, maize, gram, oil-seeds, arhar, musur including tobacco. They generally thrash their crops on the grain field which they call '*colom*'. After thrashing the crops the grains are stored with the help of rope made of straw. Before the grains are ripen they need to be watched from the attack of the wild beasts and birds and for this purpose small huts (kumba) are erected on some highplaces.

Their economy is based on agriculture. Besides agriculture their economy is supported by hunting and fishing, Wild hares, pigs, jackals, tigers, birds are their favourite games. They catch fish with

the help of net. In the field and ponds a type of shells are found which they eat.

Their land is covered with dense forests. And the forests provide them with a great number of edible things. Sal fruits, mahua flowers etc. are their food products. Country wine is prepared from mahua flower which is one of their favourite drinks. Besides this, they collect some fruits like bhelwa, char, keond, gulur, etc. for the purpose of eating. Cultivation of silk worms is also important in the economy of the Mundas. They cultivate silk worm from the trees of sakhua and atna. Atna trees are very favourable for silk worms. The Mundas domesticate some animals like cows, bulls, goats, buffaloes, dogs, sheeps, hens etc.

Regarding dresses and ornaments no Munda can be found so backward. They like to wear cleau dresses. Clothes made of cotton are well known to them. They use turban since they are well known to it. They also use comb and looking glass. Generally Munda girls decorate their hair-lock or hair-knot with flowers. They are great lovers of flowers.

### **Give and Take**

In spite of the fact that the Munda country has been surrounded by hill ranges and forests, they have been influenced by the world outside, especially by their neighbours of the plains. With the coming of industry to their country, as a consequence of its rich store of mineral wealth, people have come in close contact with railways, buses and other transports which prompted them to visit different places

to meet the challenges of life. They also realise the value of education. Today they are well acquainted with books, pencils, watches, needles, locks etc. and are enjoying a better levels of leaving. They have also learnt the art of give and take in ideas and in everything.

With this introductory note we are quoting a few riddles of these people which will serve the purpose of knowing their wisdom to some extent.

<i>Mundari</i>	<i>English</i>
(1) Nutum khani, Maid hero sèn doge dhariae, Biju dogekay deriae, Lae china tana ? <b>Sahar, Tuti</b>	A man can go, But can not come back Tell me what is that ? <b>An Arrow</b>
(2) Nutum khani Miad darure suigi sui Lae china tana ? <b>Putkel</b>	There are needles in a tree. Tell me what is that ? <b>Putkal leaf</b>
(3) Nutum khani Miad chelare Sath tho tenka Lae china tana ? <b>Bho</b>	A clod has got seven holes Tell me what is that ? <b>Head</b>
(4) Nutum khani Hende hada Pundi tasad re afinga Lae china tana ? <b>Oha Likhna</b>	A black bull grazes on the white grass Tell me what is that ? <b>To write</b>

## Mundari

## English

- (5) Nutum khani  
 Tenyam tuinta  
 sahar  
 Lel dariam  
 Lae china tana ?  
**Hurum suku**
- (6) Nutum khani  
 Ne hero katikan  
 ete taire  
 Muruk egera  
 Lae china tana ?  
**Merchi**
- (7) Nutum khani  
 Ora tedo hapa hapa  
 sena  
 Buru redo gulcya  
 Lae china tana ?  
**Hake**
- (8) Nutum khani  
 Bandi reya  
 Utu Sibila  
 Lae china tana ?  
**Kumuni**
- (9) Nutum khani  
 Buring re eyonena  
 Marang redo kaha  
 Lac china tana ?  
**Manh (bas)**

Around yourself  
 can you see the  
 brother-in-law  
 Tell me what is  
 that ?

**honey**

A man scolds in a  
 slight touch  
 Tell me what is  
 that ?

**Chilly**

A man goes silent-  
 ly from home  
 But in the forest,  
 he whistles.  
 Tell me what is  
 that ?

**An axe**

The curry of heap  
 is very testful ?  
 Tell me what is  
 that ?

**Kumuni**

A kind of man we-  
 ared cloth when  
 he is young, but  
 when he becomes  
 old he puts off his  
 dress Tell me what  
 is that ?

**Bamboo**

*Mundari**English*

- (10) Nutum khani  
Pundi merom ke  
Hend ganwa teko  
toliya  
Lae china tana ?

The white goat is  
tied by  
black thread Tell  
me what is  
that ?

**Lumang****Silk**

- (11) Natum khani  
Maid hero miad gi  
Khuntu te ora  
bieya  
Lae china tana ?

A man build his  
house in one pillar  
Tell me what is  
that ?

**Lumang****Silk**

- (12) Nutum khani  
Pani bhitre  
Chand gorgory  
Lae china tana ?

Inside the water,  
the moon cries.  
Tell me what is  
that ?

**Holong ko lad re****Bread**

- (13) Nutum khani  
Risi pisi behai  
Ghughura isan kor  
Lae china tana ?

Risi pisi leaf  
The fruit is like  
ghughur,  
Tell me what is that ?

**Boot****Gram**

- (14) Nutum khani  
Kotee borang hon  
Chain kenay agera  
Lae chin tana ?

A small child scolds  
very bitterly  
Tell me what is that ?

**Merchi****Chilly**



- | <i>Mundari</i>   | <i>English</i>   |
|--|--|
| (15) Nutum khani<br>Yebaba, kababa<br>dakoo raja awathe<br>Lae china tana ?<br><div style="text-align: right;"><b>Datrom</b></div>                       | Oh father, the dakoo<br>Raja is coming<br>Tell me what is<br>that ?<br><div style="text-align: right;"><b>Sickle</b></div>                             |
| (16) Nutum khani<br>Ye larkal, ka larkal<br>dakoo raja awathe<br>Lae china tana ?<br><div style="text-align: right;"><b>Bacchi</b></div>                 | The Dakoo Raja is<br>coming.<br>Tell me what is<br>that ?<br><div style="text-align: right;"><b>Baithi</b></div>                                       |
| (17) Nutum khani<br>Ayub biyac seta<br>kuae<br>Lae china tana ?<br><div style="text-align: right;"><b>Pati</b></div>                                     | At night it spreads<br>and in the morning<br>if folds<br>Tell me what is that ?<br><div style="text-align: right;"><b>Mat</b></div>                    |
| (18) Nutum khani<br>Maid horo hapa<br>hapa te senowa<br>Tonang re kauriye<br>Lae china tana ?<br><div style="text-align: right;"><b>Heram hake</b></div> | A man goes silently<br>And cries in the<br>forest<br>Tell me what is<br>that ?<br><div style="text-align: right;"><b>Axe</b></div>                     |
| (19) Nutum khani<br>Miad horo ora doye<br>baiya<br>Duar do kagi<br>Lae china tana ?<br><div style="text-align: right;"><b>Lumang</b></div>               | A man builds his<br>house on the back.<br>But he does not<br>make door.<br>Tell me what is that ?<br><div style="text-align: right;"><b>Silk</b></div> |
| (20) Nutum khani<br>Raja Rani ga<br>Jhank deye dariyam<br>Lae china tana ?<br><div style="text-align: right;"><b>Sukul</b></div>                         | Can you climb on<br>the Jhank of king<br>and queen<br>Tell me what is that<br><div style="text-align: right;"><b>Smoke</b></div>                       |

*Mundari**English*

- (21) Nutum khani  
Raja Rani ga  
Chari chata dariyam  
Lae china tana ?

**Bhora ub**

Can you separate the  
bamboo splinters of  
kings  
Tell me what is that ?

**Hair**

- (22) Nutum khani  
Sen dom seno tana  
Lekin kati lutur  
aintao taingma  
Lae china tana ?

**Talla**

You are going but  
touch my eyes  
Tell me what is that ?

**Key**

- (23) Nutum khani  
Maid horo janmo  
iutang marangi  
taina  
Jawano iutang  
huringi taina  
Lae china tana ?

**Umbul**

A man is tall when  
he takes birth.  
But in the prime of  
life he is small. Tell  
me what is that ?

**Shadow**

- (24) Nutum khani  
Maid horo ga  
Apia nunu  
Lae china tana ?

**Chulla**

A woman has three  
breasts  
Tell me what is  
that ?

**Hearth**

- (25) Nutum khani  
Kundaui kundam  
kuidu  
Lae china tana ?

**Billai**

By the side of wall  
Kuidu  
Tell me what is  
that ?

**Cats**

- (26) Nutum khani  
Miad horo hassa  
te paisa kamia  
Lae china tana ?

**Kumhar**

A man earns  
money from mud  
Tell me what is  
that ?

**Potter**

- | <i>Mundari</i>  | <i>English</i>  |
|---|---|
| (27) Nutum khani<br>Miad horo bunum<br>kegi jal biurea<br>Lae china tana ?<br><b>Darhi hoyo holad</b>                             | A man like salt<br>Tell me what is<br>that ?<br><br><b>Blade</b>  |
| (28) Nutum khani<br>Checha hato ding<br>dang Lae china<br>tana ?<br><b>Kera sakam</b>   | The torn winnowing<br>fan is making ding<br>dong sound<br>Tell me what is<br>that ?<br><br><b>Bannana leaf</b>  |
| (29) Nutum khani<br>Kat ke ro kothri<br>loha kera thar<br>Age age bakuli<br>sekar piche chor<br>Lae china tana ?<br><b>Naehal</b> | The room is of<br>wood and lock is<br>of iron On the front<br>there is crane and<br>behind it there is<br>thief. Tell me what<br>is that ?<br><br><b>Plough</b> |
| (30) Nutum khani<br>Miad budi ga mas<br>bara sibila<br>Lae china tana ?<br><b>Kumni</b>   | A woman's flesh is<br>very sweet<br>Tell me what is<br>that ?<br><br><b>Kumni</b>   |
| (31) Nutum khani<br>Say larang aka<br>jhopha<br>Lao china tana ?<br><b>Pit</b>  | Hundred branches<br>of only one lumber<br>Tell me what is<br>that ?<br><br><b>Market</b>  |
| (32) Nutum khani<br>Lipee lipec charai<br>Rajj bulek jatho<br>Lae china tana ?<br><b>Chithee</b>                                  | A lip lipi bird goes<br>from country to<br>country<br>Tell me what is that<br><br><b>Letter</b>   |

- | <i>Mundari</i>  | <i>English</i>   |
|---|--|
| <p>(33) Nutum khani<br/> Khas Khasa kukur<br/> kar mas<br/> Bara swad<br/> Lae china tana ?<br/> <span style="display: block; text-align: right;"><b>Kantar</b></span></p>                        | <p>The flesh of khasa<br/> dog is very testful<br/> Tell me what is<br/> that ?<br/> <span style="display: block; text-align: right;"><b>Jack fruit</b></span></p>   |
| <p>(34) Nutum khani<br/> Miad horo ora<br/> baiya<br/> Bata chetan re kha-<br/> pra phitar re<br/> Lae china tana ?<br/> <span style="display: block; text-align: right;"><b>Gungu</b></span></p> | <p>A man builds house,<br/> the timber is in the<br/> outside and tiles is<br/> in side of the house.<br/> Tell me what is<br/> that ?<br/> <span style="display: block; text-align: right;"><b>Gungu</b></span></p> |
| <p>(35) Nutum khani<br/> Rat pat jhat pat<br/> das gor teen moor<br/> Lae china tana ?<br/> <span style="display: block; text-align: right;"><b>Hadagad</b></span></p>                            | <p>Rat pat, jhat pat<br/> have ten legs<br/> And three heads<br/> Tell me what is<br/> that ?<br/> <span style="display: block; text-align: right;"><b>Bullock cart</b></span></p>                                   |
| <p>(36) Natum khani<br/> Jhata kanteday,<br/> jomeya<br/> Holong lopor ray<br/> i jeya<br/> Lae china tana ?<br/> <span style="display: block; text-align: right;"><b>Sangel</b></span></p>       | <p>He eats wood, but<br/> he latrines Holong<br/> lopor. Tell me what<br/> is that ?<br/> <span style="display: block; text-align: right;"><b>Fire</b></span></p>  |
| <p>(37) Nutum khani<br/> Miad ara hada<br/> Barey hukareya<br/> Lae china tana ?<br/> <span style="display: block; text-align: right;"><b>Dumang</b></span></p>                                   | <p>A red ball makes<br/> sound<br/> Tell me what is<br/> that ?<br/> <span style="display: block; text-align: right;"><b>Mandar</b></span></p>   |

- | <i>Mundari</i>   | <i>English</i>   |
|--|--|
| (38) Nutum khani<br>Sukhal gache tenwa<br>nachela<br>Lae china tana ?  | On the dried wood<br>tewa dances<br>Tell me what is<br>that ?  |
| <b>Hake</b>  | <b>Anaxe</b>   |
| (39) Nutum khani<br>Maid horo dinda<br>redo engate<br>Lo misate tainy<br>Anrdi koeta engate<br>lo key tainay<br>Lae china tana ? | A man lives with<br>his mother when he<br>is young but when<br>he got married he<br>does not live with<br>his mother Tell me<br>what is that ? |
| <b>Lija</b>  | <b>Cloth</b>   |
| (40) Nutum khani<br>Miad horo chair<br>paisa tegi<br>Pachas kath miad<br>ora miad sadom<br>Keering keday<br>Lae china tana ?     | A man bought fifty<br>woods, a house and<br>one horse with five<br>paisa. Tell me what<br>is that ?  |
| <b>Salai</b>   | <b>Matches</b>   |
| (41) Natum khani<br>Lal badan hara top<br>Kaho mae kis des<br>se aya hun<br>Lae china tana ?                                     | A man has red<br>body and he has<br>green hat.<br>Say from where I<br>have come<br>Tell me what is<br>that ?                                   |
| <b>Merchi</b>  | <b>Chilly</b>  |
| (42) Nutum khani<br>Aey gugu pay gugu<br>pani ke daray gugu<br>Lae china tana ?  | A gugu goes and<br>a gugu comes<br>The gugu fears<br>of water<br>Tell me what is<br>that   |
| <b>Juta</b>  | <b>Shoe</b>  |

<i>Mundari</i>	<i>English</i>
(43) Nutum khani Miad daru re sui gi sui Lae china tana ? <b>Putkal</b>	There are noodles on a tree Tell me what is that ? <b>Putkal</b>
(44) Nutum khani Chote kote doba Fulfute barare shobha Lae china tana ? <b>Dibri</b>	A small doba when the flower blossom, it is very nice. Tell me what is that ? <b>Lamp</b>
(45) Nutum khani Bumbue haku ari thola Lac chinatana ? <b>Jati suit</b>	A Bumbue fish makes field Tell me what is that ? <b>Needle</b>
(46) Nutum khani Hende hada hende tasad re atinga Lae china tana ? <b>Kaichi</b>	A black bull grass on the black Tell me what is that ? <b>Scissors</b>
(47) Nutum khani Miad horowa gena genare jang Thala re mas Lae china tana ? <b>Parkom</b>	A man has bone all around his body And in the middle there is flesh. Tell me what is that ? <b>A cot</b>

**Mundari**

**English**

- (48) Nutum khani  
Oray tedom chepta  
kangi  
Piri redo dim dim  
Lae china tana ?

In the house he is  
flat  
And on the field he  
is dim dim  
Tell me what is  
that ?

**Auoh (Dhanu)**

**Bow**

- (49) Nutum khani  
Miad maidan re  
miadge goenta  
Lae china tana ?

A man is pushed  
Tell me what is  
that ?

**Singi**

**Door**

- (50) Nutum khani  
Miad horke udur  
aderiako  
Lae china tana ?

There is only one  
cow dung cake on  
the field.  
Tell me what is  
that ?

**Duwar**

**Sun**

These and other riddles have influenced popular imagination more than any other form of folklore. Its construction is neat and the element of mystery gives a special charm and dignity to it.

# Marriage System in Magadha

By

**Yogeshwar Prasad Sinha "Yogesh"**

Wedding in India has a social, religious and cultural importance. Ever since the days of Vedic civilization, it holds a unique character. Although Magadhan people were regarded as *Vratyas* by Vedic sages, yet Magadha has adopted Vedic culture in toto ever since her ascendancy down to the fourth century B. C. Marriage system is one of those representations which prevails in its ancient form in some way or other even now. As every region possesses its own culture, Magadha too has had a culture of its own, although it is an offspring of the Vedic culture. As there is the bright and glorious history of Magadha, so is there the tradition of the folklore which follows in all spheres of life. Marriage is a social function which is accompanied with auspicious songs throughout. In this article it is proposed to throw some light on the salient features of the wedding custom and system in and around Magadha.

The Marriage system is a combination of both the anxiety and pleasure of the family. Parents are dutybound to organise the marriage of their sons and daughters by spending as much money as they are able to spend. As the girl enters into the door of youth, the father or other elderly members of the bride, wanders hither and thither in search of a suitable bridegroom. From the



bridal side some family members or relations go to the house of the bridegroom along with a Brahman priest and a barber. After the preliminary talk is over, priests of both the parties settle *Ganana* on the basis of *Janamapatri* or horoscope of the bride and the groom. The negotiation is finally settled on a promise made by the bride's father for payment of a handsome dowry to the groom's father. Then the rite of *chheka* is performed. It is observed in form of offering of the betel, areca nut, turmeric, *askshat* or unbroken rice and such other things along with some cash money in the hands of the bridegroom. Women sing melodious songs on the occasion. Then a feast is arranged in which the bridal party along with friends and relations of the bridegroom's father take part. On any other day the *tilak* ceremony is performed by the brother of the bride at the house of the bridegroom, wherein the groom is offered clothes, cooking and other utensils and also some money in cash promised. Then *lagnapatri* is written in which the date fixed for the marriage is specified after consulting the almanac. All these performances are held amidst the shower of songs with pomp at the house of the bridegroom.

Ever since the *matakor* or digging earth for the ceremonial purposes is performed the body of the bride and the bridegroom is anointed with turmeric paste mixed in mustard oil. They remain reserved and maintain sanctity at their houses. At the time of *matakor*, women in a body go to a well at night to dig earth and bring it which is placed under *kalasha* or ceremonial pitcher. A hearth is

also made of the earth which is used to fry paddy into *lava*. On the occasion songs are sung which are generally of abusive nature.

Two days before the actual performance of the marriage ceremony, *Mandap-chhadan* or erecting of marriage booth is performed. Then the rite of *Haldi-kalasha* is observed at night in which the bride and the groom are applied *ubtan* or turmeric paste at their respective houses. Men and women partake in the function and sprinkle the turmeric paste on each other within the limit of their sweet relations.

On the occasion of *ghee-dhari* or pouring of *ghee* as oblation to the ancestors, seven mother goddesses along with Gauri and Ganesh are invoked and worshipped.

When the bridegroom's marriage party is to start for going to the bride's place, the groom's nails are pared and it is known as *nahachhur*. Similar rite is also observed at the bride's house. While paring the nails, a drop of blood from the little finger is taken by a lady barber. The blood of the bridegroom is mixed with the water and put in a small earthen pot which is brought to the bride's house by the marriage party. When the bridegroom is to depart he is bathed by the lady barber. Then the rite of *Imali ghotain* is performed by the maternal uncle of the bridegroom, in which mango twigs are cut by teeth by the bridegroom and it is eaten by his mother. Similar ceremony is also performed at the bride's place.

Then the party with the bridegroom starts and reaches near the village of the bride. When it is

on the skirt of the village, bards of the bride's side present an invitation letter to the bridegroom on behalf of the bride's father. This is known as *var-newatan*. Then the marriage party and the villagers meet amidst roaring of drums trumpets and other musical instruments, running of horses and elephants. Fireworks are displayed and gas-lights are lighted. After sun set, the marriage party along with the bridegroom who is on the palanquin, dressed in costly attire, arrives at the door of the bride's father. With the chanting of Vedic hymns by the priest and singing of *mongal*-songs by women, the *paricahawan* is done. Then marriage party proceeds to *janawasa* where it has to put up in the night. Then a servant of the bride's father along with a maid comes to *janawasa* carrying a pitcher filled with water and covered with mango twigs. The occasion arouses spontaneous joy when the bridegroom converses with the servant in the following way :

The bridegroom asks --"Where do you come from ?"

"From Kamaru Kamachha" --replies the servant.

"What for ?" asks the bridegroom.

"To see the bridegroom and to present to him his bride" --replies the servant.

Then bridegroom's and bride's party both indulge in amusing conversation. This is the vestige of court-life of the old days and also of the combat which usually took place on the occasion of the marriage between a prince and a princess.

Then follows the rite of *kanyanirikshan* or seeing the bride. The elder brother of the bride-groom presents ornaments, garments and other articles

of adornment to the bride and sees her face. Member of the party has to hear abusive songs known as *Bhandi*. No one takes ill of such songs, rather they relish that very much.

Thereafter, the bridegroom is brought to the marriage booth. He is given clothes from the bride's side. One of the important rite observed on the occasion is *atiha mangana*. Eight men including the bridegroom husk paddy in a mortar with one hand and pick up eight grains of rice single handed. The bride and bridegroom move around the *vedi* or alter being preceeded by the priest. The brother of the bride gives fried rice to the groom in a *supali* or winnowing fan and bridegroom scatters them at each step. The bride and the groom then move seven times around the alter.

In the presence of both the parties, all rituals are performed and at the end, the bridegroom puts vermilion mark on the forehead of the bride. Thus the marriage rites are complete and the couple are considered as wedded. Amidst the joyous shout of *jai-jai* and chanting of *mantras* or hymns, the unbroken rice is sprinkled on the married couple. Thence the married couple proceed to *kohubar* or honey moon-chamber, where they spend the night. Sisters-in-law of the married couple sing *kohabar*-songs. The marriage party of the bridegroom as well as guests are sumptuously fed and entertained. While the groom's party is out, the women of the village perform *domkachh* which is a kind of folk-drama.

This is in brief, a sketch of marriage custom, rites and rituals of Magadha. In spite of the contrary

views of the scriptures, Magadha is considered to be a land of Aryan culture. All along the sanctity in married life as ordained by the *shastras* is maintained here. Sons are indispensable in a family life thus in a marriage ceremony they are wanted. They depict the social culture, religious and spiritual life of the people to which they belong to. These are the expression of the plain-living and high-thinking people of this land of monarchs, sages and scholars of by-gone days.

Below is given English translations of five marriage songs :

### 1. Song of Good Omen

O good omen, O good omen,  
 Marriage on auspicious day.  
 Had I known, O good omen,  
 The marriage would take place,  
 I had hidden my darling son.  
 Had I known, O Good omen,  
 The marriage would take place  
 I had hidden my darling daughter.  
     O father, you had kept me (unmarried)  
     While I was a child,  
     How would you do so now  
     When I am grown up and youthful.

### 2. Song of Tilak or Adoration

In the town of Ayodhya,  
 The triumphant drum is beaten.  
 And auspicious song is sung in every house.  
 O learned Brahman, taking red sandal in hand  
 Fix the auspicious time of marriage soon.  
 Cleaned and spread was the red carpet

In one part of that, sit king Dasarath,  
In the other part Ram and Lakshmana  
King Janak is offering *tilaka*.

The auspicious time is hastening  
The *akshats* are sprinkled by people.

### 3. Morning and Evening Songs

Seven riders, O Lord, on seven horses,  
On the foremost horse is the God sun.  
Mounting on the horse is enquiring the God  
In which house is dwelling my devotee ?  
High is the temple facing east  
Cymbal is sounding and ringing loudly.  
The golden lamp, O God, the wick of cotton  
*Ghee* of *Sorahi* burns whole night  
Ghee consumed, the wick has burnt.  
You could not play,  
O God, for four quarters of night.

### 4. Song of Mandap or Marriage booth

The *mandap* of green bamboo looks too good  
When the bride's father brought out his daughter.  
The gentleman fainted,  
Why, O gentleman, have you fainted ?  
My darling daughter has purterbed me.  
During the day, O daughter, you quench hunger  
and thrust,  
In the night, O daughter, you dispel the sleep  
from father's eyes.

### 5. Song of Anointment

My father has fixed oil pressure, O juicy paste.  
Dear maternal uncle is extracting oil, O juicy paste  
O wipe the face with muslin, O juicy paste.

# Glimpses of Magahi Ballads

*By*

**N. Sharma**

In Magahi spoken area folk singers sing a good number of ballads. As a rule ballads should have an element of dance also but gradually this element is dying out. It may be the result of the impact of modern civilization. Some Magahi ballads are associated with dance. Among the large number of ballads sung throughout the length and breadth of Magahi speaking area following are popular ;

(1) Baba Bakhtaur, (2) Raja Nal, (3) Resma, (4) Lorik-ayana, (5) Kumar Vaijee, (6) Naika Banjarwa, (7) Bihula, (8) Sorthi, and (10) Raja Gopichand. Ballads like Tekari ka Pamara, Chatri Ghughulia, Raja Bharthari, Sarthari, Saranga Sadabrichh etc. are recited here and there but they are not popular.

Following are the salient features of Magahi ballads : (a) authors not known (b) absence of standard version, (c) association of music with dance, (d) local colouring, (e) oral tradition, (f) absence of ornamental style, (g) absence of didactic tendency, repetition, (i) long plot, and (k) doubtful history.

It would be worthwhile to illustrate some of the characteristics of Magahi ballads. All the types of Magahi ballads mentioned above start with a prayer to different deities. The ballad 'Alha' starts with a prayer to Rama, Hanumata, the Sun and the Ganges. Some ballads start with a prayer

to goddess Durga, others with a prayer to Lord Siva, besides, prayer to some other gods and goddesses.

No one knows the name of the poets who composed either Resma or Raja Nal or Baba Bakhtaur or any other ballad. All these ballads change from mouth to mouth. Different singers present different versions of the same ballad. The contributor of this paper himself has recorded different versions of the Kumar Vajec and the Lorikayana ballads.

Both vocal and instrumental music is invariably associated with the ballads. Different musical instruments are used for different ballads. 'Alha' requires drum, 'Baba Bakhtaur' requires *mandara* (a special type of drum) where as 'Raja Gopichand' requires a *sarengi* (a type of Veena). The ballad 'Baba Bakhtaur' and 'Resma' are also associated with dance.

A folk singer adds description of local rituals to the ballad first. It is the cause of variations found in the *lorikavana* or the *bihula* or any other ballad. Due to this there is variation in Magahi, Maithili or Bhojpuri from of the *lorikayana*.

Most of the Magahi ballads have got oral tradition. They are preserved by folk singers. All these ballads are not didactic. The folk poet has simply narrated incidents. His intention is never to instruct. The style is not ornamental but simple. Some of the lines are repeated again and again.

Magahi ballads have long plots. The history found in these ballads is dubious. They do not tally with actual history of the land.



### Classification of Ballads

Magahi ballads can be classified on the basis of caste or religion to which they refer to, or on the basis of the predominance of passion in them.

'Lorikayana' and 'Baba Bakhtaur' have direct touch with Ahirs. Ahirs treat 'Bakhtaur Singh' as a great god and Lorik as a favoured child of the Goddess Durga.

'Resma' has got its association with Dusadhs. They think that Chuhamal, the hero of this ballad, was a great devotee of Durga who helped him in every walk of life. They worship Chuhamal like a god.

'Naika Banjara' and 'Bihula' refer to oil merchants. This caste is proud of the fact that they are the progeny of great Banjara and Chandu Shah (important characters of these ballads). Rest of the Magahi ballads refer to the *Kshatriyas*.

Ballads like 'Raja Gopichand', 'Sorthi' and 'Raja Nal' are related to Nath-cult, and Vaishnavacult. Others are related to 'Saktacults'.

'Lorikayana', 'Kumar Vaijee' and 'Alha', are heroic ballads. There are enough of heroism in all the characters of these ballads.

Again, 'Resma' and 'Naika Banjara' are love ballads because the whole atmosphere of these ballads are based on love and sex. And 'Raja Nal', 'Baba Bakhtaur', 'Bihula', 'Sorthi', 'Gopichand' etc. are romantic ballads. Here love is associated with wonder and awe. They generate surprise, at the sametime, love and affection for the great heroes and heroines. Following speak of the outline stories of some ballads.

(a) **Baba Bakhtaur** : Baba Bakhtaur destroyed evil powers like Raja Dalal Sing, Manasa, Hirni and Birni. Before starting any pious work, Ahirs offer prayer to him. *Mandara* (a special type of drum) is invariably used when this ballad is sung.

(b) **Resma** : This ballad is related to Dusadhs. Chuharmal, the hero of this ballad, was born at Anjani, a village near Mokama Junction (Patna District). Even at present a great fair takes place every year near the Akhara (wrestling ground) of Chuharmal. He is worshiped as a god by Dusadhs. He was a great devotee of the goddess Durga. He defeated a powerful landlord named Ajabi Singh by the blessings of the goddess Durga.

(c) **Raja Nal** : The place of fate has been nicely painted in this ballad. Raja Nal becomes a toy in the hand of fate. He finds himself on the moving wheel of fate. He becomes poor enough and lastely recovers his fortune.

(d) **Lorikayana** : This ballad is an epic for Ahirs. Lorik is the hero of this ballad. By force of his great valour and power, he killed evil forces like king Malaygeet and Jodhana. Even today Ahirs are proud of the great valour and power of Lorik.

(e) **Kumar Vaijee** : It is a heroic ballad and historical facts traced in it are doubtful. Battle takes place on the occasion of marriage. The brother and father of Kumar Vaijee are arrested along with other members of the marriage party. Lastly, with courage and intelligence Kumar Vaijee manages to beat away all evil forces and returns

back with all the members of his marriage party. This ballad refers to mediaeval age.

(f) **Raja Gopichand** : Raja Gopichand is related to Nath-cult. The king sacrifices royal pleasure and accepts the life of a Yogi (a mendicant). The whole ballad is full of pathos. The king Gopichand belongs to Pala-Dynasty of Bengal.

(g) **Naika Banjara** : It is a love ballad and is related to trading marchants. Sobha and Jasomati are the hero and heroine in this ballad. Sobha goes to Morang (a place in the valley of the Himalaya) in connection with his trade. Jasomati, the wife of Sobha, is driven out of her house on the false charge of adultery. In such adverse circumstances, she gives birth to a son and nurses the child well. Even when she is passing through a great crisis, she maintains unflickering faith in her husband. A very fine and charming description of the pang of separation and the value of chastity is available in this ballad. The poet has not lagged behind in depicting the malignant attitude of *Sas* (the mother-in-law) and *Nanad* (the sister of husband) towards Jasomati. The kindness of *Devur* (the younger brother of husband) has also been nicely painted in this ballad.

(h) **Bihula** : It is a ballad entirely devoted to the importance of chastity of women folk. Like Savitri, Bihula snatches away the life of her husband from the hand of Yama (God of Death) by force of her chastity. Bihula is worshipped like a goddess on Nag Panchami-day (on the fifth day of Shravan). This ballad is connected with Manasa or serpent cult of Bengal.

(i) **Sorthi** : Sorthi and Brijabhar are the heroine and hero of this ballad respectively. Brijabhar has to encounter hundred and one difficulties while procuring Sorthi, a lady, vested with extra-ordinary beauty and power. She is the incarnation of a goddess. This ballad is related to Nath-cult. Brijabhar, a rich king, becomes mendicant. There is description of other cults also in this ballad.

(j) **Alha** : This ballad is related to Bundelkhand (a place in Madhya Pradesh). According to the critics of Hindi literature this ballad was composed by the poet Jaganik. The ballad recited today has no trace of Jaganik. At present, this ballad is very popular in Magahi speaking area. The influence of Magahi is wide on it. People believe that it rains when this ballad is sung. When a folk singer starts the song of the ballad and men plays on drum, the whole atmosphere get changed with heroism. It arouses heroic feeling at once.

### **Literary Beauty**

These ballads are store-house of suggesting expression and Hindi can be enriched well with their help. Element of emotion is predominant in them. Love, heroism and pathos are the important passions which occupy important place in all these ballads. These ballads are successful in arousing similar passions in our heart, when they are sung. Rhyme, rhythm, alliteration and onomatopoea produce the desired musical effect. Only simple metaphors are used as figures of speech in them. All ballads are narrative in nature. Important characters like Alha, Lorik, Chuharmal, Barti Manjar, Bihula and

Jasomati have continued to inspire and keep the morale of unsophisticated people high.

### **Culture as depicted in these Ballads**

Most of the heroes and heroines of these ballads are far superior to the heroes and heroines of written literature, in the realm of self sacrifice and high morale. The character of Barti Manjar and Jasomati (the heroines of "The Lorikayan" and "The Naika Banjara" respectively) are not at all inferior to the characters of Urmila and Yasodhara (the wife of Lakhsmana and Lord Buddha respectively).

The affectionate love of a sister for her brother, the everlasting love of a mother for her son and the charming love of a wife for her husband, all occupy an important place in these ballads. The self sacrifice of Bihula for procuring the life of her dead husband has got its own charm and all these throw flood of light on our culture. Shortcomings of our culture have also been depicted in these ballads. Sad plight of poor people and cajoling and coercing attitude of rich people have also been painted in the heart of the folk-poet.

In these ballads birds and beasts also behave like human beings. They convey one important message of our culture that birds, beasts, human beings etc. all are the sons and daughters of the same Mother Earth. As such we should be sympathetic and kind to all creatures of the world.

# **The Importance of Maithili folk-songs**

*By*

**Tej Narayan Lal**

The Maithili culture has played an important role in the study of folklore of Bihar. Folklore depicts the culture of human society, and the culture is the expression of humanity in which the tolerance, generosity and sympathy are symbols of the progressive society. The original instigations of this culture of Mithila are related with the highest ideas for the lives of people and it can be divided, on the fundamental basis, as of religious, social and political groupings. The folklore of Mithila are of three types :

- (i) Beliefs and Traditions :
- (ii) Rites, Customs and Superstitions ; and
- (iii) Folk Literature.

In the study of folk literature—folksongs, tales, fables, legends, apologues, myths, ballads, nursery rhymes, riddles, proverbs, phrases, nicknames etc. are frequently used. So far as the availability of materials of folklore of Mithila is concerned, there is recorded folklore and the collections of Maithili folk songs. These have provided with various kinds of ideas such as spell and charm, hocus-pocus, worships of Vishnu, Śiva, Śakti, river, tree and different festivals, as well as devotion, sacrifice, reformation, conjugal life, birth, death, administration, revolution, duty, simple-living and high-

thinking, customs and so on. As regards the levels of living of the people and climate in which they live following are interesting to quote :

koksī dhotī, pətuā sīg,  
tīrhut gīt bhəṛəl ənurāg :  
bhav bhəṛal tən təpunī rāp,  
etəve tīrhut hoichh ənṛp :

and also

thehunī dhotī, muthī tīk.  
təkhən janəb, tīrhutī thīk

The famous poet Chandījhī, who has written "Maithilī R̄māyana", has depicted a picture which can be viewed in these lines :

səmutu, səmutu śiva sir jət  
əchhi ləpət.  
pəhīrīb konī pīg, ghātīhuk səghət.

In these lines the poet has suggested to the great god Śiva for decorating his matted hairs, because due to his matted hairs, it is difficult for him to put on the turban on his head. Here the poet has stressed the custom of the people of Mithila who are accustomed to use turban.

The children of Mithila, whenever they eat anything in company recite the following :

baṭ chāt khī, gəgə nəṭ i,  
əśəgər khī, guh dəbər nṛhī.

It means to say that it is essential to get rapture in the life and that can not be felt without equal distribution of the production. Whenever we eat and drink, we have to consider and look at to the conditions of others and have to share with

the people. We feel great pleasure in this. If there is any injustice in the distribution of the production in any society, the lives of the people certainly will be miserable and unsatisfiable definitely. The lives depicted in the above proverb are unsophisticated life. Their happiness in the equal distribution of production should come from childhood in a person living in the society.

Here is an expression of the life of a folk woman in Mithila :

khən nəhi chain, kəkhən sutətətī.  
 māgi-chāgi ləyōthin, dhən kūtətī  
 mō səg gəlbhat kona khaiti ?  
 gaurī dukh bhogətī.

The mother of Parvati anxiously says that my daughter cannot take rest in her life. When can she sleep? Śiva is a beggar. He will bring paddy by begging from here and there and his wife Parvati will strip husks from it, then boil the raw rice as sodden; because Śiva has no teeth in his mouth. Parvati has no leisure, she will have to eat the sodden rice every day due to her old husband. This natural depiction attracts our mind and gives the opportunity to think over the reformation of society and real justice for selection of couple in marriage.

In this "Samēdaum" (Samvād-vāṇī) songs there has been a description of the departure of a daughter to her husband's home. It is full of pathos. The daughter remembers her mother, father, brother, brother's wife and friends at the time when she is to go out from parents' house to in-law's house.



kəkerhikānəl mē nāgər lok kānəy  
 kekərhi dāhəkəl bhūi he !  
 kən nirbudhi k āgi pī bhijəl  
 kekər hridəy kəhor he !  
 bīb k kənəla mē nāgrə log kānəl  
 əm k kənəl dāhəkəl bh i he !  
 bheiya nirbudhi ke āgi topi bhijəl  
 bheuji ka hridəy kəhor he !  
 kəhi je kəhəy beī nityə boliyəb  
 kehi kəhəy chhəo mas he !

kəhi kəhəy etəhi bhəy rəhəthi  
 kəhi kəhəy dūr j i he !  
 b b kəhəthi nityə boliyəb  
 bheiy kəhəthi chhəo mas he !  
 əma kəhəthi etəhi bhəyə rəh  
 bheuji kəhəthi dūr j i he !<sup>1</sup>

Among the women of lower castes tattooing songs (Khodhapani kō gīt) are sung. Tattooing is an important rite of a newly married woman. When she feels the pain of tattooing, this song is sung in Mithila :

kəhə geli kiyo bheli choṭək nənədiy (jān)  
 p chhu choṭəka bhəiy godənək kauḍiyā (jān)  
 hən nəhi gəniyau bhaujo godənək kauḍiyī (jān)  
 əpənəli puchhi lehu əpən bhəteva (jān)

This is a "Nachari" song. Here satisfaction for tattooing and devotion to that has been depicted. 'Nachari' shows the marriage of Śiva with Parvati

1. Ramekhal Singh : Maithili lokageet, Pp. 180-181  
 Sahitya Sammelan, Prayag.

in which the humorous dialogues, such as follows, are found :

bholī, emhər suni jau  
 dāli liu chaur liu  
 khichəḍī bənāu,  
 hāməra pərəmeshər chhəthīn  
 əhā bhəri pet khau.<sup>1</sup>

The following lines of 'Bainjənūthi geet' have indicated highest ideology of rural life and culture of Mithila :

luṭəba lāgi əa-dhən sonā,  
 dekhəi lāgi rāp.  
 tīrthə chələi lāgi niməl kīyā  
 jəl bhəri lāvəy pāt !  
 hām tə khushī sē rəhəbəi ;  
 baijənūth dərbār mā !

It means to say what is the use of wealth and gold ? What is the use of beautiful body and healthy sons ? The answers of these questions have been given in the following way : Wealth and gold is for donation, beauty is for seeing. The healthy body is for pilgrimage and a son is for quenching the thirst of a man in this world. This idea of philanthropy gives us a good lesson and teaches us a moral. It further speaks what is the humanity.

In Mithila, there are many rivers, in which Koshi and Kamala rivers have played most important roles in the life and living of the people. Many songs celebrate the glories of the river goddesses.

1. Tej Narayan Lal : *Maithili lokageet* (Māi adhəyən Vinod Pustak Mandir, Agra, 1962, Pp. 173.

The horrible flood of Koshi has been indicated in this song which presents the real picture of the distress and misery of the people. As illustration two of such songs are given below :

khāiyone bhelai āmun, jīmun phələba he !  
 bānhiyo nephelai nāmī, nāmī kesəba ke jūbī.  
 bhogai lei bhelai jivə kal, lie kosi māy !

A poor village girl tells in this river-song that she could not eat the fruits like mango and black plum or plait her long hair. So her life has become sad and difficult due to the flood of Koshi. It has washed away the crops and roots of the trees.

The fisherman of Mithila worships the river goddess who is known as "Kamala Maiya". The following ideas are expressed in the Kamala Maiya song :

kāhəma bəhai chhi māia kāməlesəri  
 kāhəma bəhai chhi bəlan,  
 māia he bəhai chhi bəlan,  
 dāchhinəhi bəhəi chhəik māiya kāməlesəri  
 hāe əlapur kəthi lə bodhəbəik māiya kāməlesəri  
 māia ho kəthi ləc bodhəbəi bəlan,  
 pathi dəkə bodhəbəi māia kāməlesəri  
 phələpanc bodhəbəi bəlan.

The spring season has come, but the husband has not returned home from outside till now. She cannot tolerate the separation in this season. Thus she says :

am mājəri məhu tuəl,  
 təione pəgu mora ghurəe ;

The festival of phəgua in Mithila is very famous and charming. Many sweet folk-songs are recited

happily on this occasion. In a “phaguī” song where a girl who is newly married says :

lagəl ghaghəra,  
lagəl ghaghəra me əgia, bujhaebkəise !  
ho, sutəl piyake jəgaieb kəise !

Here the word of kəise is borrowed from Hindi.

The “jhumər” song is also popular and sung in Mithila by the women :

kon phool phuləi adhi-adhi rətia,  
kon phool phuləi bhinsar mədhubən me.  
beli phool phuləi adhi-adhi rətia,  
chəmpa phool phuləi bhinsar mədhubenme :

‘Rətiya’ is a typical word of Bhojapuri, but ‘rait’ is a Maithili word which has derived from Sanskrit ‘rātri’.

In a “Niragun” song there is the indication of an unknown power and mystery :

phuləva lorhəite rama, pəniya bərisgeləi,  
bhiji geləi patəri chir re ki !  
ohi səməy me rama piya mora , bə geləi  
mən nəi rəhələi mora this re ki !

For obtaining the pleasure of flower the nature showered the rains of loves from which the Viyoginīātmī's body and skirt got wet. Suddenly, seeing the lover, her mind went out of control and she wanted to unite with him.

The perception of Radha is marvellous by drawn in this song :

enomə jənito piya madhopur jəyətə,  
padhitaumə rəshəm kə dor ahe səkhiā !

reshəm bādemma tute phatie jætəi,  
badhitəu mə əchəra ləgay, ahe səkhiā !

Radha passes on separation so she wants to write a letter to Krishna. In this sweet song she says :

əchəra ke phari-phari kəgəda bənəito,  
likhitome piya ke səndesh, ahe səkhiya !  
katc-kute likhito hunək kushəlia  
biche me piya ke viyog, ahe səkhiya !

In the center of the letter Radha writes—"Viyog" (separation). It is because Krishna will see this sign first and being grieved psychologically he will try to come to see her at once.

Some samples of the Maithili folk-songs have been shown in this short paper which might be useful to examine the cultural aspects and activities of the people of Mithila. It is necessary to look at the classification of Maithili folk-songs. This can be had in the following way :

(a) **On the basis of rituals of the life-cycle :** sohar mundan, gəneū, ləgəni, səmməri, yog, uchəti, gwaləri, səmədaun, beti ke bidai, tiruhuti, bələgə-məni, mətəuti (elegy : funeral songs).

(b) **On the basis of religious rituals :** chhəthəgit, (sun-songs) gosauəni, məheshəvani shitəla geet, nədiget (river songs) vishnupəd bhratrihəri, jəgərənəthia, kəmərəthua, devas, jhijhia, gəia, kalibənni, mənawti, sɪp kə geet (snake's songs) ghərə-nigeet etc.

(c) **On the basis of occupation :** chacher, jat-geet, kolkugeet, həzaməkəgeet (barber's songs) dhobigeet, pamarriageet khodəpədənigeet (tattooing songs).

(d) **Seasonal songs** : phəguā, chəītavər, məlar, mədhu savanī, bərsāit (bətsivitrī) pīvəs, prəbhatī, səndhyā, bhəirəvī, vihāg, bərəhəmāsī.

(e) **Dance songs** : jhumər, jəttə jəttin, shyāmī-chəkevā, rās, bīptā, nətuā.

(f) **On the basis of socio-economic situations** : nəchīrī, floods songs of koshī river and other famine songs, sātya graha songs, protest songs, bhoodan songs.

(g) **Miscellaneous songs** :

(1) General songs :

shishu geet, virahī, nirəgunī,  
keerətən, udāsee, etc.

(2) Special Songs :

kəthageet, lorik, sələhes,  
deenabhədri, kəməl, koilī,  
balarānchhətrī, nājbəchhəraj  
bəraj, rāyərāpī, hənshīkur,  
gərhbāb, etc.

Besides this classification, the depiction of philosophical, psychological and social thoughts in Maithili folksongs are also found. Specially, in the social affairs, these songs are very much popular. They depict the following themes :

- (a) conjugal life
- (b) problem of marriage
- (c) joy and sorrow
- (d) social value
- (e) sign of pregnancy
- (f) sorrow on daughter's birth

- (g) importance of love
- (h) send off to the married daughter
- (i) religious ideas, satisfaction and devotion to god
- (j) songs of poverty
- (k) songs of philanthropy and protest songs.  
"Vasūdhāivā kuṣāmbakam"

It is noticed that the modern Maithili folk-songs are getting influenced by the filmy songs. So the purity and originality of folksongs are gradually getting lost. Its singers are not pure folk singers and in this way it is very difficult to differentiate a filmy song from a genuine Maithili folk-song. The songs of Vidyapati are really used in every class of people of the society. Some songs are typical folk songs, specially songs of Nachari, Mahesavām, Tiruhuti and the type.

A detailed study of Maithili folk song seems at first sight to be of minor significance in the over all history of local people. In fact to follow the tracks, metaphorically speaking, this is necessary to discover many of the most interesting questions to be asked about the rural life. Folk songs, in one sense or another, is the vanguard or associated with most of the changes which occur for the peoples of the area yet they are traditional, they are handed down.

## SOME MAITHILI FOLK-SONGS

1.    kokati dhoti patua sag.  
      tirhut geet bharal anurag.  
      vhav bharal tan taruni rup,  
      atavi tirhut hoichh anup ;  
      the huna dholi, muthia tik,  
      takhan janab. tirhutia thik ;  
      samutu, samutu shiva sir jat,  
      achhi latapat  
      pahiraeb kona pag ghuntihuk sangat ;  
      banti chut khai ganga nahai,  
      asagar khai guh dabara nahai.  
      khan nahi chain kakhan sutati,  
      mangi changi layathin, dhan kutati  
      mand sang gilbhat kona khaiti ?  
      gauri dukh bhogati.
2.    kekarhi kanal men nagar lok kanay  
      kekarhi dahakal bhuin he !  
      kaun nirbudhiak angi tope bhinjal  
      kekar hriday kathor he !  
      babak kanale men nagnra log kanal  
      amak kanal dahakal bhuin he !  
      bhaiya nirbudhia ka angi topi bhijal  
      bhauji ka hriday kathor he !  
      kehi je kahay beti nitya bolayab  
      kehi kahay chhao mas he !  
      kehi kahay etahi bhay rahathi  
      kehi kahay dur jan he !  
      baba kahathi nitya bolayab  
      bhaiya kahathi chhao mas he !  
      ama kahathi etahi bhaye rahathi



bhauji kahathi dur jau he !  
kahan gelin kiya bheli chhotaki nanadiya  
(jan)  
puchhu chhotaka bhaiya gedanak kaudiya  
(jan)  
ham nahi janiyan bhaujo godanak kaudiya  
(jan)  
a panahi puchhi lehu apan bhatava (jan)  
bhola, emhar suni jan  
dali liu, chaur liu khichadi  
banan,  
hamara parameshar chhathin  
chan bhari pet khan.

3. lutabe lagi an-dhan sona.  
dekhai lage rup  
tirtha chalai lagi nimal kaya  
jal bhari lavay put !  
ham to khushi se rahabai e ;  
bairnath darbar men  
khaiyona bhelai amun, jamun falaba he !  
banhiyo ne bhelai nami kesaba ke judba  
bhogai lie bhelai jwakal, he kosi may !  
kahama bahaichhi maia kumalesari,  
kahama bahai chhi balan,  
maia he bahai chhi balan,  
dachhinahi bahai chhai maniya kamalsari,  
hae alapur kathi lae bodhabaik maiya  
kamalesari,  
maia ho kathi lae ka bodhabai balan,  
pathi da ka bodhabai maia kamalesari  
phalepane bodhabai balan ;

an majari, mahu tual,  
 taione pahun mora ghural,  
 layal ghaghara, lagal ghaghara men agia,  
 bujhaeb kaise !  
 ho, sutal piya ke jagaib kuise !  
 kaun phool phulai adhi adhi ratia,  
 kaun phool phulai bhinsar madhuban men,  
 beli phool phulai adhi-adhi ratia  
 champa phool puhlai bhinsar madhubanme.  
 phulava lorhaite rama, paniya barisgelai  
 bhinji gelai patari chir re ki !  
 ohi samay men rama piya mora abi gelai  
 man nai rahalai mora thir re ki.  
 enon men janito piya madhopur jayatan  
 bandhiton men reshamak dor ahe sakhiya !  
 reshama bandanma tuti phati jaetai  
 bandhitaun men anchara lagay, ahe  
 sakhiya  
 anchara ke phari phari kagada banaiton  
 likhiton men piya ke sandesh, ahe sakhiya  
 kate-kute likhiton hunak kushalia  
 biche men piya ke viyog, ahe sakhiya.

3. (a) Sohail, mundan, Janeu, lagani, sammari,  
 Yog, uchati, gwalari, samadaun, beti ka  
 bidai, tiruhuti, bataga mani, matauti.
- (b) Chathagit gosavani, maheshavani, shitala  
 geet, nadigeet, vishnupad, bhratrihari,  
 jagaranathia, kamarathua, devas, jhijhia,  
 gain, kalibanni, manawati, sanp ke geet,  
 jharani geet.
- (c) chanchar, jant geet, kolka geet, hajamaka

geet, dhobi geet, pamariya geet, khoda-padani geet.

(d) phagua, chaitavar, malar, madhusavani, barsait, pavas, prabhati, sandhya, bhairavi, vihag, barahamasa.

(e) jhumar, jetajattin, shyama chakava, ras, bipta, natua.

(f) nachari.

(g) (1) shishu geet, viraha, nirgun, keertan, udasee.

katha geet, lorik, salahes, deena-bhadri, kamala koila, balaram chhatri  
hansaraj bachharaj, banjara, ray  
ranpal, gopi thakur, garhubaba.

Reading these; it becomes apparent how far removed the sophisticated person still to today from realizing the greatness of the folk people and the magnitude of his intuitive wisdom.

# Some aspects of marriage in Bhojpuri Folklore

By

Satya Deo Ojha

In this paper particular mention has been made to folk customs which are observed in a marriage in Bhojpuri area Bihar.

There are four types of marriage in Mithila. In it two or sometimes three families are concerned. Generally, in a marriage only the families of bride and bridegroom appear as co-relative. In the first type, bride's father gives his daughter in marriage to a bridegroom. The second type of marriage is known as '*Golat*', in which, two parties are concerned. Each party has a bride as well as a groom. This type of marriage is very rare and is performed in very poor families. The third type of marriage is rather more complicated. It is known as '*Tinpharwa*' (exchange between three parties). In such a type of marriage three parties of three different villages come together ; each party gets a bride in exchange of its own. This is supposed to be an improvement upon '*Golat*' marriage, where two parties are directly engaged in exchange. In order to avoid this direct exchange between the two parties, a third party is sought. The fourth type of marriage is '*Dol Karhui*'. In this marriage, a poor guardian, who cannot afford to pay the expenses of the marriage of his ward, sends the bride to the groom's house before marriage. At groom's house,

all the rites and rituals are supposed to be performed in the manner it was due to be performed at the bride's place and at his expense. But whatever type of marriage there might be, the character of the ceremonial functions are the same.

Besides these four types of marriage, there is one more typical marriage between two trees—*Am* (mango) and *Mahua* (bassia). The mango is the bridegroom and the bassia is the bride. The significance of this marriage is magico-religious. If a man has planted a mango garden, he must not take its fruit unless the mango is duly married to a bassia tree. A small function is held in the garden itself and both the trees are worshiped and marriage ceremony performed.

Many folklorists have made a good many observations regarding the folklore of matrimony. R. D. Jameson has observed many marriage customs. He says that much of the folklore of marriage is created by professional singers more by married folk who, puzzled by the confusions introduced by the religions, the sexual and the social urges, have tried to make sense in a situation which is constantly disrupted by powerful impulses, each of which is good in itself. In a Bhojpuri marriage we find such folklore in plenty. Here we find both the ritual thinking as well as the magical thinking. As far as marriage of the folk people is concerned an important part is played by women for its development. They try to protect the bride and the groom from the evil spirits by performing different rites and rituals.

Usually marriage is settled after so many talks

and negotiation. This is known as *Var-Raksha* (settling the bridegroom). But marriage is finally settled when '*Tilak*' is performed ; dowry is given, where necessary, and a formal sanction is made by the groom's father, ('*Lagna Patri*') which is written by *Purohit* (priest). It is known as marriage document. After '*tilak*' a particular date is fixed which is known as '*sagun*'. Here the blessings of gods and spirits are invoked. From this day onward the bride keeps her hair untied, has to go without bath and has to keep with her a piece of iron or an instrument of it to guard against the evil spirits. She is not allowed to move alone specially at night. She is prohibited to brooming and fetching water from the well or river. Such things are observed by the groom as well. With all these the marriage is ceremonially observed.

After the *sagun*, some other date is fixed for making *mandap* (marriage booth). This is made with the help of eight or nine bamboo poles. The dimension of the *mandap* is determined according to the length of bride's hand. On some other date a special ceremony of digging earth is performed. At this time some vulgar songs pertaining to sex appeal are sung. This is a fertility rite probably done for arousing sex feelings of the bride and the groom. After this function, rice pounding is done. This is known as '*adal hadal chawal*' (exchange of rice). In this rite, pounding instrument like '*musal*' symbolises the male organ and '*okhali*' symbolises the female organ. On this occasion too vulgar songs are sung in which mention of the names of male

and female organs are made very frequently. This rice is specially pounded for the bride and groom which she or he has to take with them on the day of marriage with four other unmarried members of her or his sex. This rice is known as "*Kuarath Ka Bhat*" (rice for bachelor or virgin). This is the last rite of virginity and bachelorhood which the bride and the groom take at their places. The bride keeps a nut in her mouth throughout the day. This nut is used with a betel and is given to the groom in a joke. The groom, if he is ignorant of it, takes the betel : it creates fun and joy for the assembled, particularly to the young girls surrounding the groom.

On the marriage day one function pertaining to love-magic is performed. When the bridegroom takes bath under special arrangement a very small ditch is dug by the sister of the groom. On the ditch a yoke is placed for the bridegroom to stand on water is poured upon him by five married women whose husbands are alive. This water is preserved by the mother of the groom in her '*sari*' and is put in an earthen pot held by the barber. After the bath is over, mustard and *ajwain* are taken around the head of the groom and thrown in by fire near by. This rite is performed to do away the influence of evil spirits and the groom is purified finally. The water is, thus, presented by the barber, taken by him to the bride's place. It is mixed with water thereof. With this mixed water the bride takes her bath. This love magic is performed probably to create love between the couple in their afterlife.

Another rite is called "*Lawa Bhunjai* (frying of paddy). Some paddy is taken to *bhar bhunja* (a professional caste which fries corn). This special paddy is set apart on the day of *tilak* and both parties have equal share and they arrange to get this paddy fried on the marriage day. At this time too vulgar songs are sung. The fried paddy (*lawā*) brought from groom's place is mixed with the *lawā* of bride's place by the bride's brother. This is known as *Lawa merai* (mixing of *lawā*).

After the marriage is over the barber makes nail cutting of the bride and the groom. These nails cut are packed in two mango leaves and tied in exchange to the right hand of the groom and left hand of the bride. This is known as tying of *kakan*. This is done probably to protect the newly wedded couple from the hand of the evil spirits.

Just after the marriage ceremony is over in the *mandap* both the bride and the bridegroom are brought in a special room known as *kahabar-room*. This is the room where the household god is installed. Here both the bride and the bridegroom bow their heads before the god. The bride is required to place her foot-toe on a stone and bridegroom is required to displace it for continuous five times. This is performed wishing expected deep love between them. The stone symbolises steadfastness of love. Generally the bride has to take the meal left by the groom. After this, a baby is placed in the lap of the bride. This is a fertility magic.



# Some Tribal Songs From Champaran

By

Ganesh Chaubey

## THE DHANGAR SONGS

The hilly tracts of Champaran comprising of Someshwar and Don hills of outer Himalayan range, covered with dense forest of lofty Sal, Karam, Banjhi and Semal are inhabited by an aboriginal tribe, locally known as Dhangar ( धांगर ). In the beginning of the nineteenth century, several indigo factories owned by European planters sprang up in the district of Champaran and there was a demand of hard-working labourers to work in indigo factories and to assist the planters in hunting incursion in the jungles of Champaran, haunted by wild beasts. To meet the demand, there was an influx of immigrants mostly from Oraons and Musahars ( मुसहर ) from Chhotanagpur. The Musahars settled nearabout the indigo farms, but most of the Oraons preferred to settle in the jungles of Don ( दोन ) in P. S. Bagaha of the district.

The term Dhangar originally meant an Oraon bachelor, but it is now used to denote a group of tribal people of Champaran, as a whole, irrespective of their belonging to a particular tribe such as Oraon, Munda, Bhuiya and so on. According to the Census Report of 1941, the population of Oraons-Dangars were 12,717 in the district. In the Census Report of 1961, the population of the Oraon is shown as

2,065, while that of Dom or Dhangars as 16,954. Hence the total population of Oraons or Dhangars come to 19,019 in the district of Champaran. Dhangars are simple, honest and cheerful people but somewhat shy before the strangers. The girls have well-built body with a dark complexion and their hairs are glossy, combed and coiffured. They are first grade agricultural labourers. They pass their leisures in hunting, fishing, merry-making, dancing, singing and so on.

In Don Valley, Dhangars found the natural surroundings to their choice. The lack of easy communication in this tract kept them aloof to a great extent from rest of the district. Hence, they still maintain in their dances, their original technique, movements, gestures and postures and also their mode of decoration which are accompanied with drum ( मंद्गर ) and flute. Their songs depict their social and domestic life along with their joys and sorrows, their associations with wild life and objects of nature. They still retain their original music, rhythm and rhyme. Most of the Dhangar songs are sung in their own language, that is Oraon. But the number of such songs are not insignificant. The language which is an admixture of Mundari and Bhojpuri, is the spoken language of Champaran as well as some other parts of Chhotanagpur. Bhojpuri which is used by the Dhangars are so moulded as to conform the linguistic trends of their own language. We may call this hybrid language as Dhangari-Bhojpuri which awaits to be studied thoroughly.

Bellow is given the English renderings of a few Dhangar songs which were collected and recorded in Devanagari script with their Hindi translation. The original songs are given to this article at the end of the English translations.

**English renderings of Dhangar songs**

- I            Take me to home soon, O my love  
              I shall feel hungry  
              And my face will wither.
- II            What fault I have done  
              If I want to grind millet  
              My husband is cruel  
              He has broken the handle  
              and peg of the grinding mill.  
              And has beaten me  
              I shall drive one of the plough oxen  
              And go to my father's house.
- III           Now I am busy in household work  
              I shall take care of the house  
              I don't like dancing now.
- IV           Don't cut joke with me  
              I have a child  
              Tomorrow I shall take part  
              In Bheja dance.
- V            The young man and the young girl  
              Are hidden in the mountain  
              In the morning,  
              Catch hold of them, and beat them.  
              Catch hold of them, and beat them.

- VI**    He has gone to bring grass for making rope  
Gone for grass for making rope. He is delaying  
He has uprooted grass and blocked the hole  
Gone for grass for making rope. He is delaying.
- VII**        Starling Starling I call  
Where has gone the Starling  
O darling O Starling  
O tired and thirsty Starling  
For you is a golden cage  
O darling Starling.
- VIII**       The crow makes the nest  
The cuckoo lays the eggs  
The bat gives birth of young ones  
In Dhaulagiri mountain  
The peahen lays the eggs.
- IX**         Ducks and water fowls are sporting  
The green pond is filled with.
- X**          A leaf has sprouted in jessmine  
The turmeric has flowered,  
O my love.  
The second leaf is beautifying it.
- XI**         One mango is green  
One mango is yellow  
One mango is like collyrium  
One mango is like vermillion  
O sister, the elder sister has burst  
into laughter  
One mango like marble is cut.

- XII**      **King Dasarath had seven queens**  
**O gentleman, none of the seven queens**  
**had a son. Who will got the kingdom ?**  
**Who will enjoy the state ?**  
**Who will be adorned with**  
**coronation mark ? O gentleman,**  
**The youngest one got the kingdom,**  
**the eldest one got the state**  
**O gentleman, the middle one was adorned**  
**with coronation mark.**

**Oraon Song recorded in Nagri Script**

- ( १ )      गुच हो अकुर्ना हा पीसा हो किड़ा तुरु सो मने  
 खादी पइरी किड़ा तुरु सो के मने
- ( २ )      कोदई कसा केरन दइगो कवन बेजायन जन  
 हेर मेथ चंडल दइगो जता रवीला डंडा तुरु लवा चरा  
 लवा गेलब चस दइगो द्वार भरी अडोनो खेडोन होन
- ( ३ )      नेबसा पड़ा रेन धिया उनडुल बेचा पोल टेन  
 नेड़ ॥ पाली माने होले नेपड़ा न खापान  
 दीआरी शेम्न बदलन
- ( ४ )      पइरी न पत बिरु हाँसी  
 अमके नाना खाद माखो रदन  
 बिजु हले भेजा बिच्
- ( ५ )      कुहुल कुटा पारे तानु  
 पेळो गाने कापर करा दे
- ( ६ )      पोमनिया कादै मला बरदै  
 पोमनिया गेने बिमल रादै  
 घासी न नांच दै भोकड़ो नोट दै  
 पोमनिया गेने बिमल रादै

( ७ )

मैना मैना हाक पारे  
मैना कहाँ गेल मैना रे मति आ  
ककासला मैना पिआसला  
तोहरा लागुन मैना सोने के  
पीजड़ा मैना रे मतिआ

( ८ )

कउआ जे खोता पारी  
कोइली जे अंडा पारी  
बादुर पीती छउआ करी  
धउला गिरी परबत में  
निरसबदी माजुर अंडा पारी

( ९ )

हाँसन गरेवा भीरिहिरि खेलै  
हरिअर पोखरी भरि गेला

( १० )

एक पतई आवे नइली चमइली  
फुलाई हरदी हो नंदलाल  
दुई पतई लहासा ले आवे

( ११ )

नेक ताषा हरिअर  
नेक ताषा पीअर  
नेक नाषा कजराके मोल मई  
नेक नाषा सिंदुरा के मोल  
बइनी गे लमकी बइनी खद खद हाँसे  
नेक नाषा सोसा गोली छाँदं मई

( १२ )

दसरथ राजा निकसे सात रानी  
साजन ! सातो के बालक नाही  
केहुके राज भइली केहुके पाट भइली  
छोटकी के राज भइली बड़कीके पाट भइली  
साजन मक्कली के तीलक चढ़ो

### The Tharu Songs

The Tharus belong to a semi-Hinduised tribe inhabiting in Tharuhat (थरुहट), the land of Tharus, which is situated in the valley of the outer Himalayan range in Nepal as well as in the jungles of the bordering Indian states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. They spread from the Sarada river in the west to the Kosi river in the east. According to the Census Report of 1941 the population of Tharus residing in Indian territory in the district of Champaran was 38,982 and in that of Nepal was not known. Later, on representation of Tharus, they have been enumerated along with the rest of the Hindu population in the Census Report of 1961 and their present numerical strength is not known. However, in the Census Report of 1961 of the Nepal Government, those who speak *Tharuari* language are numbered 359,594 in that country. The main occupation of Tharus is agriculture. They are honest, simple and cheerful people passing their leisures in hunting, fishing, dancing, singing and merry-making. Their songs are beautiful depicting their jungle life. Most of them retain their original vigour and preserve their sentiments, dance, music, and to a large extent, they are free from outer influences. Below is given the English renderings of five Tharu songs.

- I      From the hilly mountain comes a *Jogi*  
         And sits in the cool shade of *Kadamba*  
         The *Jogi* is thirsty  
         O sister, drawing water from the well,  
         Give me to drink a drop of water  
         And acquire merit.

No water in the well, no rope with the pitcher  
 With what shall I give you water to drink  
 And acquire merit ?  
 In the well is water  
 Give me to drink and acquire merit.  
 You gave me water, sister  
 You cooled my heart  
 Speak out the affairs to the household  
 The thankful I am all alone.

II      From the hilly mountain comes a parrot  
 O gentleman !  
 And sits down on the branch of a mango tree.  
 O gentleman !  
 I gave a challenge, flew off all parrots,  
 O gentleman !  
 A parrot is very obstinate. O gentleman !  
*Dewar*, I'll give anklets befitting your anklet.  
 O gentleman !  
 Trapping the parrot, hand over to me  
 O gentleman !

III     Catching the anklet, surrounded the cloud  
 Stay for to night of *Rohini*, O cloud !  
 My love has gone to steal other's, O fair girl !  
 The moon is befooling me, O fair girl !

IV     *Jhirjhir Jhirjhir* ripples the river, O fair girl !  
 The wench is catching fish  
 The swooping kite took away the necklace  
 On the branch of that *Semal* tree  
 O brother, buffalo-grazer



I don't know the name of yours  
Form the branch of the *Semal* tree,  
Take down the necklace,  
You and I shall delay.

- V The forest wherein the deer barks,  
O gentleman !  
In that forest my love was kept allured  
O gentleman !  
In the forest wherein the peacock cries,  
O gentleman !  
In that forest my love was kept allured,  
O gentleman !

### Tnaru Songs in Nagri Script

- I गिरि परबत से जोगिया एक आवे हो ना  
बढ़वले कदम जुड़ी छँहिया, जोगिया पिआसल री ।  
अरी अरी बहिनी कँइया पनिहारिन  
छक याके पनिया पीआवहूँ, धरम बहु री लेव री ।  
कँइयाँ नाहो पनिया फलम नाही डोरिया  
केह लइ पनिया पिआइवि धरम बहु रो लेव रौ ।  
कँइयाँ बाड़े पनिया पिआवहूँ, धरम बहु री लेव री ।  
पनिया पिचवले बहिनी जिया सुसतइले  
कहि घालू धरही के कुमल हम धनी असकर हे ।
- II गिरि परबत से सुगा एक आवे, की हाय री साजन री  
बढ़ि गेला अयखूख डारि, की हाय रो साजन री  
एक हाँके पारि देल सब सुगा उड़ि गेल, की हाय रे साजन री  
एक सुगा बढ़ा रे गरारे, की हाय रे साजन री  
देवसुन रे देवरा गोड़े जोगे पइरी, की हाय रे साजन री  
सुगवा बम्हाइ मोके दुहूँ, की हाय री साजन री

III

गोइइँ के चढ़वा टोकि घेरलनि बादरि  
 आजु की रोहिनिया रानि बिलमहूँ बादरी  
 पिछवा गइले पर चोरी हाय गोरी  
 पिछवा गइले पर चोरी हाय गोरी  
 चन्द्र लागे निबोधे हाय गोरी

IV

झिग्हिरि झिग्हिरि लदिया जे बहे गोरी,  
 तिरिया माछर मारे ।  
 झपडलि चिलिया हरइया लेइ गेलिया,  
 ओही रे सेमर कह डार ।  
 आरे आरे भइया भइयो चरवहवा,  
 नाँ ना जानिले तोहार ।  
 सेमर हाट मे हरइया घींचि देहूँ,  
 तोरा मोरा भोग बिलास

V

जाही बने हरना कुहकले हो साजन  
 ताही रे बने पियवा रहले भोराइ हो साजन  
 जाही बने मोरवा कुहकले हो ताजन  
 ताही रे बने पियवा रहले भोराइ हो साजन

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